

THE COLLECTED POEMS

Lyrical and Narrative

Of

Mary Robinson

(Madame Duclaux)

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COLLECTED
POEMS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

RETROSPECT, *Demy 12mo, paper boards,* 3/6

THE NEW ARCADIA, 3/6





THE COLLECTED POEMS

Lyrical and Narrative

OF

A. Mary F. Robinson

(Madame Tenebris)

With a Preface

and Portrait

A. Mary F. Robinson

Mary F. Robinson

London: T. Fisher & Son
Paternoster Square

A. Mary F. Robinson.
1. Mary Duclaux.

*After a Drawing by
Miss Lisa Stillman
From a Photograph by
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To
THE MEMORY
OF
JAMES DARMESTETER

*Amori et Dolori
Sacrum*

▲

PREFACE

I HAVE always thought that one should write poetry only as one dies ; that is to say, at the last extremity and when it is impossible to do otherwise. And yet, after some three-and-twenty years of much refraining, I find myself possessed of a considerable volume of Collected Poems, to say nothing of that larger quantity of verse disseminated in the waste-paper baskets of London, Paris, Italy, Touraine, Auvergne. By no means all my published poems are reprinted here ; I have retained such as seemed to me the best. In sending them out to affront the world anew, with some fresh companions, I have carefully re-considered them all, revised the greater part, and re-written a good many. I have hesitated under what name to publish them, and, persuaded that no reader will remember two foreign names, in addition to an English one, I have reverted to that which I bore when first I wrote them. Mary James Darmesteter has no longer a right to exist. As regards the English public, Madame Duclaux has given no proof of her existence ; she has, she hopes, before her a modest future of French prose, and leaves her English verses to Mary Robinson.

I send forth this little book with scant expectance of immediate success. Entirely lyrical, intellectual, or romantic, these little poems must sound as the merest

PREFACE

tootling of Corydon's reed-pipe in ears accustomed to the martial music of our times. Yet, like all poets, I trust these little songs may find an audience to-morrow : they have that saving virtue of sincerity which is the salt of Art. But if I see the necessary grace that they possess, how clearly, alas ! do I perceive the magnificent qualities they lack ! Here there is nothing of the rush, the sumptuous abundance, the vigour, the splendour of Byron or Hugo ; nothing of that sensuous magic and flooding glory which make certain lines of Keats and Swinburne blaze, as it were, in colour on the page. Still I fancy that Wordsworth, Tennyson, Vigny, and even the immortal Goethe—all the meditative poets—might have cared to read some of these sober little songs.

We cannot all be great poets ; but the humblest, if they be sincere, may give a genuine pleasure. I have marked in red the days on which I discovered certain poets, most certainly minor, who died centuries ago. With what delight I made acquaintance with Ausonius and Dr. Donne, still more so with Joachim de Bellay, Marie de France, or Shahid the Bactrian : dear, enchanting books, exhumed from the dustiest corner of the library, that never counted on me for an audience. I may have to wait as long till I repay my debt to some other student who perchance, beside a bookstall of Cape Town or Honolulu, may fish my poems from the fourpenny box, or light on them in some anthology. But I count on his appreciation.

Depend upon it, after the very greatest names in poetry (who are to all of us a second religion) the minor poets have the happiest lot. Each of us worships in the temples of Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, Molière ; but each of us also has some private niche, some inconsiderable intimate shrine, for the poet no one praises, who is all the more our own. How dreary the state and rank of your second-best great poet, enthroned in dismal glory on the less frequented slopes of Parnassus ! Who lights a

PREFACE

taper or pulls a posy for Dryden or Schiller or Alfieri ? We admire them sincerely ; in theory, we love them. How often in the year do we take down their works and read them ? Take the case of a writer who, in his person, unites one of the greatest of epic writers to the most exquisite of minor poets : which do we read the more often, "Lycidas" or "Paradise Regained" ? . . . I live in a Catholic country where almost every city boasts of its historic cathedral. They are nearly always empty. But turn down the side street, enter yon barn-like chapel topped by a wooden cross : the whitewashed walls of the sanctuary of St. Anthony of Padua are thronged with worshippers intimate and devout. St. Peter and St. Paul have their incomparable domes ; save on highdays and holidays, they have them all to themselves ! In the work-a-day hours of life, when you snatch at a prayer in passing, as you pluck a rose over a fence, half furtively—the swift petition, the familiar avowal, are, apparently, for the Lesser Saint. The chapel of the Minor Poet may be too small to admit the crowd ; it may be thronged when three or four are gathered together. None the less, it has its use and place. It is, I believe, a mistake, to suppose, as Tolstoy contends, that no Art is legitimate save that which has for its object the happiness of the greatest number. Yet I admit that the poet who consciously addresses a few is, by definition, the Minor Poet, the man of a smaller race, the younger brother, who, whatever his merits, shall not obtain the full inheritance.

"Shall Life be an Ode ? Or shall Life be a Drama ?" wrote one day James Darmesteter, the friend of all my verses and the occasion of many among them. My life has been an Ode, of which those pages are the scattered fragments. If ever I have escaped from its tranquil sequences, it has been but for an instant and through some partial opening of the gates of Imagination, set in movement by some incident in real life or some episode of my reading.

PREFACE

I have never been able to write about what was not known to me and near. Tim Black, the Scapegoat, and most of the personages of the New Arcadia, lived on a common in Surrey near my garden gates : all of them are drawn from human models. The Romantic Ballads were inspired by my historical studies. Some persons of culture have refused me the right to express myself in those simple forms of popular song which I have loved since childhood as sincerely as any peasant. If the critics would only believe it, they have come as naturally to me, if less happily, than they came of old to a Lady Wardlaw, a Lady Lindsay, or a Lady Nairn. We women have a privilege in these matters, as M. Gaston Paris has reminded us. We have always been the prime makers of ballads and love songs, of anonymous snatches and screeds of popular song. We meet together no longer on Mayday, as of old, in Provence, to set the fashion in *tensos* and sonnets. But some old wife or other, crooning over her fire of sticks, in Scotland or the Val d'Aosta, in Roumania or Gascony, is probably at the beginning of most romantic Ballads. Mine, of course, have the fatal defect of having crystallised too soon ; they lack the patient polish of succeeding generations. But that it is, most obviously, not in my power to remedy. The only way would be for my readers to learn them by heart, half-forget them, and re-write them, omitting the non-essential. It is a necessary process ; but I can only offer them in their unripeness, reminding my readers that the beautiful *rispetti* of the Tuscan hills, the ballads of Scotland and Piedmont, have all at one moment lacked the admirable *patina* which age and time alone confer.

MARY DUCLAUX.

OLMET, CANTAL,
September, 1901.

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*AN ITALIAN GARDEN, AND
OTHER LYRICS*



M'affaccio alla fenestra e veggo il mare
E mi ricordo che s'ha da morire :
Termineranno le speranze eare !

—TUSCAN STORNELLO.

Un cœur tendre qui hait le néant vaste et noir
Du passé lumineux recueille tout vestige.

—BAUDELAIRE.

Florentine May



STILL, still is the Night ; still as the pause after pain ;
Still and as dear ;

Deep, solemn, immense ; veiling the stars in the clear
Thrilling and luminous blue of the moon-shot atmo-
sphere ;

Ah, could the Night remain !

Who, truly, shall say thou art sullen or dark or unseen,
Thou, O heavenly Night,

Clear o'er the valley of olives asleep in the quivering
light,

Clear o'er the pale-red hedge of the rose, and the lilies
all white

Down at my feet in the green ?

Nay, not as the Day, thou art light, O Night, with a
beam

Far more dear and divine ;

Never the noon was blue as these tremulous heavens or
thine,

Pulsing with stars half seen, and vague in a pallid shine,
Vague as a dream.

FLORENTINE MAY

Night, clear with the moon, filled with the dreamy fire
 Shining in thicket and close,
Fire from the lamp in his breast that the luminous fire-
 fly throws ;
Night, full of wandering light and of song, and the
 blossoming rose,
 Night, be thou my desire !

Night, Angel of Night, hold me and cover me so—
 Open thy wings !
Ah, bend above and embrace !—till I hear in the one
 bird that sings
The throb of thy musical heart in the dusk, and the
 magical things
 Only the Night can know.

Remembrance



O NIGHT of Death, O night that bringest all !
Night full of dreams and large with promises,
O night that holdest on thy shadowy knees
Sleep for all fevers, hope for every thrall ;

Bring thou to my belovèd, when I die,
The memory of our enchanted past ;
So let her turn, remembering me at last,
And I shall hear and triumph where I lie.

Then let my face, pale as a waning moon,
Rise on thy dark and be again as dear ;
Let my dead voice find its forgotten tune
And strike again as sweetly on her ear
As when, upon my lips, one far-off June,
Thy name, O Death ! she could not brook to
hear.

Venetian Nocturne



Down the narrow Calle where the moonlight cannot
enter,

 The houses are so high ;
Silent and alone we pierced the night's dim core and
centre—

 Only you and I.

Clear and sad our footsteps rang along the hollow
pavement,

 Sounding like a bell ;
Sounding like a voice that cries to souls in Life's
enslavement,

 “ There is Death as well ! ”

Down the narrow dark we went, until a sudden
whiteness

 Made us hold our breath ;
All the white Salute towers and domes in moonlit
brightness,—

 Ah ! could this be Death ?

Invocations



O song in the nightingale's throat, O music,
Dropt as it fell by a falling star,—
All of the silence is filled with thy pain,
Listening till it shall echo again.

O song in the nightingale's throat, O music,
Thou art the soul of the silence afar !

O space of the moon in the starless heaven,
Raining a whiteness on moorland and sea,—
Falling as lightly and purely as dew,
All of the shadow thou filterest through ;

O space of the moon in the starless heaven,
Surely the night is the shadow of thee !

O silence of Death, O world of darkness,
When over me the last shadow shall fall,
Holdest thou safe in the night all around
Any moon to arise, any music to sound ?

O silence of Death, O world of darkness,
Say, shall we feel thee or know thee at all ?

The Feast of St. John



A MAN goes twanging a mandoline down in the valley,
A girl sings late
By the city gate,
A chorus rings from the wine-shop, there, in the alley,

*(O cruel voices, cruel music making,
I cannot sleep and am so sick of waking !)*

The lanterns strung in the Piazza burn scarlet and
yellow,

They swing and shine
In a fiery line ;

The fire-flies flit thro' the fields where the corn is
mellow.

*(Already in the East, alas, the morrow
Pales with the sick renewal of a sorrow.)*

Treasure Song



THE miser loves to count his store
Of barren ducats o'er and o'er :
Above all pomp or pleasure
He loves his golden treasure.

And I do love to count alone
A useless treasure of mine own
Heigho ! Delights of dreaming,
So dear, and only seeming !

Temple Garlands



THERE is a temple in my heart
Where moth or rust can never come,
A temple swept and set apart
To make my soul a home.

And round about the doors of it
Hang garlands that for ever last,
That gathered once are always sweet ;
The roses of the Past !

To a Rose Dead at Morning



O PURPLE blossoms, rained upon,
O'er which the noon-day never shone,
Which never knew the dearest prime
And fragrance of the summer time,—

O blossoms, shedding all your leaves,
Before they feel the coolest dew,
My soul that so untimely grieves
And sheds her song is even as you !

Strewings



STrow poppy buds about my quiet head
And pansies on mine eyes,
And rose-leaves on the lips that were so red
Before they blanched with sighs.

Let gilly-flowers breathe their spicy breath
Under my tired feet,
But do not mock the heart that starved to death
With aught of fresh or sweet !

Pallor



THE great white lilies in the grass
Are pallid as the smile of death ;
For they remember still—alas !—
The graves they sprang from underneath.

The angels up in heaven are pale—
For all have died, when all is said ;
Nor shall the lutes of Eden avail
To let them dream they are not dead.

Tuscan Cypress

(SIXTEEN RISPETTI)



I.

My mother bore me 'neath the streaming moon,
And all the enchanted light is in my soul.
I have no place amid the happy noon,
I have no shadow there nor aureole.

Ah, lonely whiteness in a clouded sky,
You are alone, nor less alone am I ;
Ah, moon, that makest all the roses grey,
The roses I behold are wan as they !

II.

What good is there, Ah me, what good in Love ?
Since, even if you love me, we must part ;
And since for either, and you cared enough,
There's but division and a broken heart ?

And yet, God knows, to hear you say : My Dear !
I would lie down and stretch me on the bier.
And yet would I, to hear you say : My own !
With mine own hands drag down the burial stone.

TUSCAN CYPRESS

III.

I love you more than any words can say,
And yet you do not feel I love you so ;
And slowly I am dying day by day,—
You look at me, and yet you do not know.

You look at me, and yet you do not fear :
You do not see the mourners with the bier.
You answer when I speak and wish me well,
And still you do not hear the passing-bell.

IV.

O Love, O Love, come over the sea, come here,
Come back and kiss me once when I am dead !
Come back and lay a rose upon my bier,
Come, light the tapers at my feet and head.

Come back and kiss me once upon the eyes,
So I, being dead, shall dream of Paradise ;
Come, kneel beside me once and say a prayer,
So shall my soul be happy anywhere.

V.

I sowed the field of Love with many seeds,
With many sails I sailed before the blast,
And all my crop is only bitter weeds ;
My sails are torn, the winds have split the mast.

All of the winds have torn my sails and shattered,
All of the winds have blown my seed and scattered,
All of the storms have burst on my endeavour,—
So let me sleep at last and sleep for ever.

VI.

I am so pale to-night, so mere a ghost,
Ah, what, to-morrow, shall my spirit be ?
No living angel of the heavenly host,
No happy soul, blithe in eternity.

TUSCAN CYPRESS

Nay ; I shall wander on beneath the moon
A lonely phantom seeking for you, soon ;
A wandering ghost, seeking you timidly,
Whom you will tremble, dear, and start to see !

VII.

When I am dead and I am quite forgot,
What care I if my spirit lives or dies ?
To walk with angels in a grassy plot,
And pluck the lilies grown in Paradise ?

Ah, no ! the heaven of all my heart has been
To hear your voice and catch the sighs between.
Ah, no ! the better heaven I fain would give,
But in a cranny of your soul to live.

VIII.

Ah me, you well might wait a little while,
And not forget me Sweet, until I die !
I had a home, a little distant isle,
With shadowy trees and tender misty sky.

I had a home ! It was less dear than thou,
And I forgot, as you forget me now.
I had a home, more dear than I could tell,
And I forgot, but now remember well.

IX.

Love me to-day and think not on to-morrow !
Come, take my hands, and lead me out of doors,
There in the fields let us forget our sorrow,
Talking of Venice and Ionian shores ;—

Talking of all the seas innumerable
Where we will sail and sing when I am well ;
Talking of Indian roses gold and red,
Which we will plait in wreaths—when I am dead.

TUSCAN CYPRESS

X.

There is a Siren in the middle sea
Sings all day long and wreathes her pallid hair.
Seven years you sail, and seven, ceaselessly,
From any port ere you adventure there.

Thither we'll go, and thither sail away
Out of the world, to hear the Siren play !
Thither we'll go and hide among her tresses,
Since all the world is savage wildernesses.

XI.

Tell me a story, dear, that is not true,
Strange as a vision, full of splendid things ;
Here will I lie and dream it is not you,
And dream it is a mocking bird that sings.

For if I find your voice in any part,
Even the sound of it will break my heart ;
For if you speak of us and of our love,
I faint and die to feel the thrill thereof.

XII.

Let us forget we loved each other much,
Let us forget we ever have to part,
Let us forget that any look or touch
Once let in either to the other's heart.

Only we'll sit upon the daisied grass
And hear the larks and see the swallows pass ;
Only we'll live awhile, as children play,
Without to-morrow, without yesterday.

XIII.

Far, far away and in the middle sea—
So still I dream, although the dream is vain,—
There lies a valley full of rest for me,
Where I shall live and you shall love again.

TUSCAN CYPRESS

O ships that sail, O masts against the sky,
Will you not stop awhile in passing by ?
O prayers that hope, O faith that never knew,
Will you not take me on to heaven with you ?

XIV.

Flower of the Cypress, little bitter bloom,
You are the only blossom left to gather ;
I never prized you, grown amid the gloom,
But well you last, though all the others wither.

Flower of the Cypress, I will bind a crown
Tight round my brows to still these fancies down.
Flower of the Cypress, I will tie a wreath
Tight round my breast to kill the heart beneath.

XV.

Ah, Love, I cannot die, I cannot go
Down in the dark and leave you all alone !
Ah, hold me fast, safe in the warmth I know,
And never shut me underneath a stone.

Dead in the grave ! And I can never hear
If you are ill or if you miss me, Dear.
Dead, oh my God ! and you may need me yet,
While I shall sleep ; while I—while I—forget !

XVI.

Come away Sorrow, Sorrow come away—
Let us go sit in some cool, shadowy place ;
There shall you sing and hush me all the day,
While I will dream about my lover's face.

Hush me, O Sorrow, like a babe to sleep,
Then close the lids above mine eyes that weep ;
Rock me, O Sorrow, like a babe in pain,
Nor, when I slumber, wake me up again.

Love Without Wings

(EIGHT SONGS)



I.

I THOUGHT : no more the worst endures !
I die, I end the strife,—
You swiftly took my hands in yours
And drew me back to life !

II.

We sat when shadows darken,
And let the shadows be :
Each was a soul to hearken,
Devoid of eyes to see.

You came at dusk to find me ;
I knew you well enough . . .
O lights that dazzle and blind me—
It is no friend, but Love !

III.

How is it possible
You should forget me,
Leave me for ever
And never regret me !

LOVE WITHOUT WINGS

I was the soul of you,
Past love or loathing,
Lost in the whole of you . . .
Now, am I nothing ?

IV.

The fallen oak still keeps its yellow leaves
But all its growth is o'er !
So, at your name, my heart still beats and grieves
Although I love no more.

V.

And so I shall meet you
Again, my dear ;
How shall I greet you ?
What shall I hear ?

I, you forgot !
(But who shall say
You loved me not
—Yesterday ?)

VI.

Ah me, do you remember still
The garden where we strolled together
The empty groves, the little hill
Starred o'er with pale Italian heather ?

And you to me said never a word,
Nor I a single word to you.
And yet how sweet a thing was heard,
Resolved, abandoned by us two !

VII.

I know you love me not . . . I do not love you
Only at dead of night
I smile a little, softly dreaming of you
Until the dawn is bright.

LOVE WITHOUT WINGS

I love you not ; you love me not ; I know it !
But when the day is long
I haunt you like the magic of a poet,
And charm you like a song.

VIII.

O Death of things that are, Eternity
Of things that seem !
Of all the happy past remains to me,
To-day, a dream !

Long blessed days of love and wakening thought,
All, all are dead ;
Nothing endures we did, nothing we wrought,
Nothing we said.

But once I dreamed I sat and sang with you
On Ida's hill.
There, in the echoes of my life, we two
Are singing still.

Semitones



I.

GIVE me a rose not merely sweet and fresh,
Not only red and bright,
But caught about in such a thorny mesh
As rankles in delight.

Smile on me, Sweet ; but look not only kind :
The smile that most endears
Trembles on pallid lips from eyes half-blind
With brine of bitter tears.

II.

Ah, could I clasp thee in mine arms,
And thou not feel me there,
Asleep and free from vain alarms,
Asleep and unaware !

Ah, could I kiss thy pallid cheek,
And thou not know me nigh ;
Asleep at last, and very meek,
Who wert as proud as I.

III.

We did not dream, my Heart, and yet
 With what a pang we woke at last !
 We were not happy in the past
It is so bitter to forget.

We did not hope, my Soul, for Heaven ;
 Yet now the hour of death is nigh,
 How hard, how strange it is to die
Like leaves along the tempest driven.

Elysium



INTO the valley of Death am I come,
 Into the asphodel meadow,
Where in the grass there is never a tomb,
 Where there is rest and shadow !

All of the world is estranged to my eyes,
 Scarce can I see you or hear you—
You that are far from my faint Paradise—
 Though I am with you and near you.

All that I hoped for and all that I was,
 Drops like a cloak from my shoulders,
Leaving the soul unencumbered to pass
 Out of the ken of beholders.

Yea, in the valley of Death I awoke,
 Pallid and strange as a vision.
All of my sorrow is vanished as smoke—
 These are the valleys Elysian !

Stornelli and Strambotti



I.

FLOWER of the vine !

I scarcely knew or saw how love began ;
So mean a flower brings forth the sweetest wine !

* * * * *

O mandolines that thrill the moonlit street,
O lemon flowers so faint and freshly blown,
O seas that lap a solemn music sweet
Through all the pallid night against the stone,
O lovers tramping past with happy feet,
O heart that hast a memory of thine own—
For Mercy's sake no more, no more repeat
The word it is so hard to hear alone !

* * * * *

Flowers in the hay !

My heart and all the fields are full of flowers ;
So tall they grow before the mowing-day.

II.

Rose in the rain !

We part ; I dare not look upon your tears :
So frail, so white, they shatter and they stain.

* * * * *

STORNELLI AND STRAMBOTTI

Love is a bird that breaks its voice with singing,
Love is a rose blown open till it fall,
Love is a bee that dies of its own stinging,
And Love the tinsel cross upon a pall.
Love is the Siren, towards a quicksand bringing
Enchanted fishermen that hear her call.
Love is a broken heart,—Farewell,—the wringing
Of dying hands. Ah, do not love at all !

* * * * *

Rosemary leaves !
She who remembers cannot love again.
She who remembers sits at home and grieves.

Celia's Home-Coming

(TO F. M. R.)



MAIDENS, kilt your skirts and go
Down the stormy garden-ways,
Pluck the last sweet pinks that blow,
Gather roses, gather bays,
Since our Celia comes to-day
That has been too long away.

Crowd her chamber with your sweets—
Not a flower but grows for her !
Make her bed with linen sheets
That have lain in lavender ;
Light a fire before she come
Lest she find us chill at home.

Ah, what joy when Celia stands
By the leaping blaze at last
Stooping down to warm her hands
All benumbèd with the blast,
While we hide her cloak away
To assure us of her stay.

CELIA'S HOME-COMING

Cyder bring and cowslip wine,
Fruits and flavours from the East,
Pears and pippins too, and fine
Saffron loaves to make a feast :
China dishes, silver cups,
For the board where Celia sups !

Then, when all the feasting's done,
She shall draw us round the blaze,
Laugh, and tell us every one
Of her far triumphant days—
Celia, out of doors a star,
By the hearth a holier Lar !

Posies



I MADE a posy for my love
As fair as she is soft and fine :
The lilac thrift I made it of,
And lemon-yellow columbine.

But woe is me for my despair,
For my pale flowers, woe is me
A bolder man has given her
A branch of crimson peony !

Alternatives



DEAREST, should I love you more
If you understood me ?
If, when I am sick and sore,
Straightway you divined wherefore,
Then with herbs and healing store
Of your love imbued me ?

Nay, I have instead, you know,
In your heart an arbour
Where the great winds never go
That about my spirit blow.
Where the sweet wild roses grow,
Sweeter thrushes harbour.

What a joy at last to rest
Safe therein from sorrow !
What a spur, when sore distressed,
To at last attain your breast !
When the night is loneliest
What a hope of morrow !

Dryads



THE Dryads dwell in Easter woods,
Though mortals may not see them there ;
They haunt our rustling solitudes,
And love the solemn valleys where
The bracken mocks their tawny hair.

And where the rushes make a hedge
With flowering lilies round the lake,
They come to shelter in the sedge ;
They dip their shining feet and slake
Their thirst where shallow waters break.

But through the sultry noon their home
Surrounds some smooth old beechen stem.
Behold how thick the empty dome
Is heaped with russet leaves for them,
Where burr or thistle never came !

And there they lie in languid flocks,
A drift of sweetness unespied ;
They dream among their tawny locks
Until the welcome eventide
Breathe freshly through the woods outside.

DRYADS

And then a gleam of white is seen
Among the huge old ilex-boughs ;
The Dryads love its sombre green ;
They make the tree their summer-house,
And there they swing and there carouse.

But, if the tender moon by chance
Come up the skies with silver feet,
They spring upon the ground and dance
Where most the turf is thick and sweet,—
And would that we were there to see 't !

Nay ! Nay ! For should the woodman find
A Dryad in a hollow tree,
He drops his hatchet, stricken blind—
I know not why, unless it be
The maid's Immortal, and not he !

For none may see the nymph uncursed.
And things unchristian haunt the woods . . .
They stoop above our wells athirst,
They love our rustling solitudes
Where olden magic ever broods :

The Dryads dwell in Easter woods !

Rosa Rosarum



GIVE me, O friend, the secret of thy heart
Safe in my breast to hide,
So that the leagues which keep our lives apart
May not our souls divide.

Give me the secret of thy life to lay
Asleep within mine own,
Nor dream that it shall mock thee any day
By any sign or tone.

Nay, as in walking through some convent-close,
Passing beside a well,
Oft have we thrown a red and scented rose
To watch it as it fell ;

Knowing that never more the rose shall rise
To shame us, being dead ;
Watching it spin and dwindle till it lies
At rest, a speck of red—

Thus, I beseech thee, down the silent deep
And darkness of my heart,
Cast thou a rose ; give me a rose to keep,
My friend, before we part.

ROSA ROSARUM

For, as thou passest down thy garden-ways,
Full many a blossom there
Groweth for thee : lilies and laden bays,
And rose and lavender.

But down the darkling well one only rose
In all the year is shed ;
And o'er that chill and secret wave it throws
A sudden dawn of red.

An Oasis



You wandered in the desert waste, athirst ;
My soul I gave you as a well to drink ;
A little while you lingered at the brink,
And then you went, nor either blessed or cursed.

The image of your face, which sank that day
Into the magic waters of the well,
Still haunts their clearness, still remains to tell
Of one who looked and drank and could not stay.

The sun shines down, the moon slants over it,
The stars look in and are reflected not ;
Only your face, unchanged and unforgot,
Shines through the deep, till all the wave are lit.

My soul I gave you as a well to drink,
And in its depths your face is clearer far
Than any shine of sun or moon or star—
Since then you pause by many a greener brink.

Castello



THE Triton in the Ilex-wood
Is lonely at Castello.
The snow is on him like a hood,
The fountain-reeds are yellow.

But never Triton sorrowed yet
For weather chill or mellow :
He mourns, my Dear, that you forget
The gardens of Castello !

Torrents



I know that if our lives could meet
Like torrents in a sudden tide,
Our souls should send their shining sheet
Of waters far and wide.

But, ah ! my dear, the springs of mine
Have never yet begun to flow—
And yours, that were so full and fine,
Ran dry so long ago !

Aubade Triste



THE last pale rank of poplar-trees
Begins to glimmer into light,
With stems and branches faintly white
Against a heaven one dimly sees
Beyond the failing night.

A point of grey that grows to green
Fleck'd o'er with rainy yellow bars,—
A sudden whitening of the stars,
A pallor where the moon has been,
A peace the morning mars ;

When, lo ! a shiver of the breeze
And all the ruffled birds awake,
The rustling aspens stir and shake ;
For, pale, beyond the pallid trees,
The dawn begins to break.

And now the air turns cool and wan,
A drizzling rain begins to fall,
The sky clouds over with a pall—
The night, that was for me, is gone ;
The day has come for all.

Poplar Leaves



THE wind blows down the dusty street ;
And through my soul that grieves—
It brings a sudden odour sweet :
A scent of poplar leaves.

O leaves that herald in the spring,
O freshness young and pure,
Into my weary soul you bring
The vigour to endure.

The wood is near, but out of sight,
Where all the poplars grow ;
Straight up and tall and silver white,
They quiver in a row.

My love is out of sight, but near ;
And through my soul that grieves
A sudden memory wafts her here
As fresh as poplar leaves.

Spring Under Cypresses



UNDER the cypresses, here in the stony
Woods of the mountain, the Spring too is sunny.
Rare Spring and early,
Birds singing sparsely,
Pale sea-green hellebore smelling of honey.

Desolate, bright, in the blue Lenten weather,
Cones of the cypresses sparkle together,
Shining brightly,
Loosely and lightly,
The winds lift the branches and stir them and feather.

Where the sun pierces, the sharp boulders glitter
Desolate, bright ; and the white moths flitter
Pallidly over
The bells that cover
With faint-smelling green all the fragrant brown litter.

Down in the plain the sun ripens for hours—
Look ! in the orchards a mist of pale flowers—
Past the rose-hedges
A-bloom to the edges,
A smoke of blue olives, a vision of towers !

SPRING UNDER CYPRESSES

Here only hellebore grows, only shade is ;
Surely the very Spring here half afraid is :
 Out of her bosom
 Drops not a blossom,
Mutely she passes through—she and her ladies.

Mutely ? Ah, no ; for a pause, and thou hearest
One bird who sings alone—one bird, the dearest.
 Nay, who shall name it,
 Call it or claim it ?
Such birds as sing at all sing here their clearest.

Ah, never dream that the brown meadow-thrushes,
Finches, or happy larks sing in these hushes.
 Only some poet
 Of birds, flying to it,
Sings here alone, and is lost to the bushes.

Music



BEFORE the dawn is yet the day
I lie and dream so deep,
So drowsy-deep I cannot say
If yet I wake or sleep.

But in my dream a tune there is,
And rings so fresh and sweet
That I would rather die than miss
The utmost end of it.

And yet I know not an it be
Some music in the lane,
Or but a song that rose with me
From sleep, to sink again.

And so, alas, and even so
I waste my life away ;
Nor if the tune be real I know,
Or but a dream astray.

Art and Life

(A SONNET)



WHEN autumn comes, my orchard trees alone,
Shall bear no fruit to deck the reddening year—

When apple gatherers climb the branches sere
Only on mine no harvest shall be grown.

For when the pearly blossom first was blown,

I filled my hands with delicate buds and dear,

I dipped them in thin icy waters clear,

O well of Art ! and turned them all to stone.

Therefore, when winter comes, I shall not eat
Of mellow apples such as others prize :

I shall go hungry in a magic spring !—

All round my head and bright before mine eyes

The barren, strange, eternal blossoms meet,

While I, not less an-hungered, gaze and sing.

A Pastoral of Parnassus

“Ma io perchè venirvi ? O chi 'l concede ?”



At morning dawn I left my sheep
And sought the mountains all aglow ;
The shepherds said, “The way is steep :
Ah, do not go !”

I left my pastures fresh with rain,
My water-courses edged with bloom,
A larger breathing space to gain
And singing room.

Then of a reed I wrought a flute,
And as I went I sang and played.
But though I sang, my heart was mute
And sore afraid.

Because the great hill and the sky
Were full of glooms and glorious
Beyond all light or dark that I
Imagined thus.

A PASTORAL OF PARNASSUS

A sudden sense, a second sight,
Showed God, who burns in every briar.
Then sudden voices, strong and bright,
Flashed up like fire.

And turning where that music rang
I saw aloft, and far away,
The watching poets ; and they sang
Through night and day.

And very sweet—ah, sweet indeed—
Their voices sounded high and deep.
I blew an echo on my reed
As one asleep.

I heard. My heart grew cold with dread,
For what would happen if they heard ?
Would not these nightingales strike dead
Their mocking-bird ?

Then from the mountain's steepest crown,
Where white cliffs pierce the tender grass,
I saw an arm reach slowly down,
Heard some word pass.

"The end is come," I thought, "and still
I am more happy, come what may,
To die upon Parnassus-hill
Than live away."

Then hands and faces luminous
And holy voices grew one flame—
"Come up, poor singer, and sing with us !"
They sang ; I came.

So ended all my wandering ;
This is the end and this is sweet—
All night, all day, to listen and sing
Below their feet.

A Search for Apollo



INDEED I have sought thee too long, O Apollo,
Nights and days, by brakes and bowers,
By wind-haunted waters, by wolf-haunted hollow,
And where the city smoke-cloud lowers ;
And I have listened hours on hours
Where the holy Omphé of violins
The organ oracle overpowers,
While the musical tumult thickens and thins,
Till the singing women begin to sing,
Invoking as I do their Master and King ;
But thou tarriest long, O Apollo !

Could I find but thy footprints, oh, there would I
follow.

Thou God of wanderers show the way !
But never I found thee as yet, my Apollo,
Save indeed in a dream one day.
(If that or this be the dream, who shall say ?)
A man passed playing a quaint sweet lyre,
His face was young though his hair was grey,
And his blue eyes gleamed with a wasting fire
As he sang the songs of an ancient land—
A singing no hearer could half understand. . . .
Can this have been Thou, my Apollo ?

An Address to the Nightingale

(FROM ARISTOPHANES)



O DEAR one, with tawny wings,
Dearest of singing things,
Whose hymns my company have been,
Thou art come, thou art found, thou art seen !
Bid, with the music of thy voice,
Sweet-sounding rustler, the heart rejoice ;
Ah ! louder, louder, louder sing,
Flute out the language of the spring ;

Nay, let those low notes rest,
Oh ! my nightingale, nightingale, carol thine anapæst !

Come, my companion, cease from thy slumbers,
Pour out thy holy and musical numbers,
Sing and lament with a sweet throat divine,
Itys of many tears, thy son and mine !
Cry out, and quiver, and shake, dusky throat,
Throb with the thrill of thy liquidescent note.
Through the wide country and mournfully through
Leafy-haired branches and boughs of the yew,
Widens and rises the echo until
Even the throne-room of God it shall fill.

AN ADDRESS TO THE NIGHTINGALE

Then, when Apollo, the bright-locked, hath heard,
Lo, he shall answer thine elegy, bird,
Playing his ivory seven-stringed lyre,
Standing a God in the high Gods' quire.

Ay, bird, not he alone :

Hark ! from immortal throats arise
Diviner threnodies

That sound and swoon in a celestial moan
And answer back thine own.

Come, my companion, cease from thy slumbers,
Pour out thy holy and musical numbers,
Sing and lament with a sweet throat divine,
Itys of many tears, thy son and mine !
Cry out, and quiver, and shake, dusky throat,
Throb with the thrill of thy liquidesst note.
Through the wide country and mournfully through
Leafy-haired branches and boughs of the yew,
Widens and rises the echo, until
Even the throne-room of God it shall fill !

Wild Cherry Branches



I.

LITHE sprays of freshness and faint perfume,
You are strange in a London room ;
Sweet foreigners come to the dull, close city,
Your flowers are memories, clear in the gloom,
That sigh with regret and are fragrant with pity.

II.

Flowers, a week since your long, sweet branches
Swayed, hardly seen, in the dusk overhead ;
(We live, but the bloom on our living is dead).
Ah ! look, where the white moon launches
Her skiff in the skies where the roof-tops spread,

III.

Like rocks on her course. But she rose not so
Through your wavering sprays, when the April weather
Smelt only of flowers a week ago—
On your stems, in my heart, did such blossoms blow !
Let us sigh all together !

IV.

Your sigh is, perchance, for the neighbouring bushes
With soft, yellow palms, or the song of the thrushes ;
But mine for none of the birds that sing,
No flower of the spring,
But for two distant eyes and a voice that hushes.

v.

Such light and music, O blossom,
Were ours when I plucked you one moonrise, and you
Remember in fragrance her smile that you knew,
As you lived in her hand, as you lay on her bosom
Once, for a moment, and blossomed anew.

vi.

As I took you I looked, half in awe, where my friend
Crowned with completeness
All heaven's peace and the whole earth's sweetness ;
So does her soul all souls transcend,
So, in my love for her, all loves blend.

vii.

For more than the vast everlasting heaven
Declares in its infinite mute appeal
To hearts that feel,
More than the secret and solace of even
Know of God, may a love reveal.

viii.

For then indeed it was clear to my soul
That in loving the one I loved the whole,
Fulfilled all aims, attained every goal ;
And God was with me, eternity round me,
Though Life still bound me.

ix.

Past is that hour ; but the heart's trouble lessens
Because it has been.
When I die, when free of its selfish screen
The god in me soars to the Godhead, the Presence
May seem to it first as the love once seen.

x.

We, flowers, have lived to our blossoming hour,
And not in vain did we rise from the root ;
Whether we perish or ripen to power,
We know what sweetness it is to flower
Let life or death be the fruit.

Tuscan Olives

(SEVEN RISPETTI)



I.

THE colour of the olives who shall say ?
In winter on the yellow earth they're blue,
A wind can change the green to white or grey,
But they are olives still in every hue ;

But they are olives always, green or white,
As love is love in torment or delight ;
But they are olives, ruffled or at rest,
As love is always love in tears or jest.

II.

We walked along the terraced olive-yard,
And talked together till we lost the way ;
We met a peasant, bent with age and hard,
Bruising the grape-skins in a vase of clay ;

Bruising the grape-skins for the second wine,
We did not drink, and left him, Love of mine ;
Bruising the grapes already bruised enough :
He had his meagre wine, and we our love.

TUSCAN OLIVES

III.

We climbed one morning to the sunny height
Where chestnuts grow no more and olives
grow ;
Far-off the circling mountains cinder-white,
The yellow river and the gorge below.
“Turn round,” you said, O flower of Paradise ;
I did not turn, I looked upon your eyes.
“Turn round,” you said, “turn round and see the
view !”
I did not turn, my Love, I looked at you.

IV.

How hot it was ! Across the white-hot wall
Pale olives stretch towards the blazing street ;
You broke a branch, you never spoke at all,
But gave it me to fan with in the heat ;
You gave it me without a sign or word,
And yet, my dear, I think you knew I heard.
You gave it me without a word or sign :
Under the olives first I called you mine.

V.

At Lucca, for the autumn festival,
The streets are tulip-gay ; but you and I
Forgot them, seeing over church and wall
Guinigi's tower soar i' the black-blue sky ;
A stem of delicate rose against the blue ;
And on the top two lonely olives grew,
Crowning the tower, far from the hills, alone ;
As on our risen love our lives are grown.

VI.

Who would have thought we should stand again
together,
Here, with the convent a frown of towers above
us ;

TUSCAN OLIVES

Here, mid the sere-wooded hills and wintry
weather ;

Here, where the olives bend down and seem to
love us ;

Here, where the fruit-laden olives half remember
All that began in their shadow last November ;

Here, where we knew we must part, must part and
sever ;

Here, where we know we shall love for aye and
ever.

VII.

Reach up and pluck a branch, and give it me,

That I may hang it in my Northern room,

That I may find it there, and wake and see

—Not you ! not you !—dead leaves and wintry
gloom.

O senseless olives, wherefore should I take

Your leaves to balm a heart that can but ache ?

Why should I take you hence, that can but show

How much is left behind ? I do not know.

Apprehension



I.

THE hills come down on every side,
The marsh lies green below,
The green, green valley is long and wide,
Where the grass grows thick with the rush beside,
And the white sheep come and go.

Down in the marsh it is green and still ;
You may linger all the day,
Till a shadow slants from a western hill,
And the colour goes out of the flowers in the rill,
And the sheep look ghostly gray.

And never a change in the great green flat
Till the change of night, my friend.
O wide green valley where we two sat,
How I wished that our lives were as peaceful as that,
And seen from end to end !

II.

O foolish dream, to hope that such as I
Who answer only to thine easiest moods,
Should fill thy heart, as o'er my heart there broods
The perfect fulness of thy memory !
I flit across thy soul as white birds fly
Across the untrodden desert solitudes :
A moment's flash of wings ; fair interludes
That leave unchanged the eternal sand and sky.

APPREHENSION

Even such to thee am I ; but thou to me
As the embracing shore to the sobbing sea,
Even as the sea itself to the stone-tossed rill.
But who, but who shall give such rest to thee ?
The deep mid-ocean waves perpetually
Call to the land, and call unanswered still.

III.

As dreams the fasting nun of Paradise,
And finds her gnawing hunger pass away
In thinking of the happy bridal day
That soon shall dawn upon her watching eyes ;
So, dreaming of your love, do I despise
Harshness or death of friends, doubt, slow decay,
Madness,—all dreads that fills me with dismay
And creep about me oft with fell surmise.

For you are true, and all I hoped you are,
O perfect answer to my calling heart !
And very sweet my life is, having thee.
Yet must I dread the dim end shrouded far ;
Yet must I dream: should once the good planks start,
How bottomless yawns beneath the boiling sea !

Friendship



FOR your sovereign sake, my friend,
All my lovers are estranged,
Shadow lovers without end ;
But last night they were avenged.

On the middle of the night
One by one I saw them rise,
Passing in the ghostly light,
Silent, with averted eyes.

First, my master from the South
With the laurels round his brow,
And the bitter-smiling mouth,
Left me—without smiling now.

Then came one long used to rule
All I was, or did, or had—
Plato, that I read at school
Till my playmates called me mad.

Maiden saints as pure as pearls,
Beautiful, divine, austere ;
Sweeter-voiced Æolian girls,
Left their friend of many a year.

FRIENDSHIP

But my earliest friend and best,
My Beethoven, this was hard,
You should leave me with the rest,
Pass without one last regard.

For all went and left me there,
Sighing as they passed me by ;
Ah, how sad their voices were !
I shall hear them when I die.

“Fare thee well,” they said ; “we go
Scorned as shades and dreams. Adieu !
Love thine earthly friend, but know
Shadows still thou dost pursue.”

Two Lovers



I.

I LOVE my lover ; on the heights above me
He mocks my poor attainment with a frown.
I, looking up as he is looking down,
By his displeasure guess he still doth love me ;
For his ambitious love would ever prove me
More excellent than I as yet am shown :
So, straining for some good ungrasped, unknown,
I vainly would become his image of me.

And, reaching through the dreadful gulfs that sever
Our souls, I strive with darkness nights and days,
Till my perfected work tow'rd him I raise,
Who laughs thereat, and scorns me more than ever ;
Yet his upbraiding is beyond all praise.
This lover that I love I call : Endeavour.

II.

I have another lover loving me,
Himself beloved of all men, fair and true,
He would not have me change although I grew
Perfect as Light, because more tenderly
He loves myself than loves what I might be.

TWO LOVERS

Low at my feet he sings the winter through,
And, never won, I love to hear him woo.
For in my heaven both sun and moon is he,
To my bare life a fruitful-flooding Nile,
His voice like April airs that in our isle
Wake sap in trees that slept since autumn went.
His words are all caresses, and his smile
The relic of some Eden ravishment ;
And he that loves me so I call : Content.

A. Grey Day



I wait alone in a stranger's land,
By unremembered floods I stand,
 Whose shores unhaunted are.
I sorrow, and who shall comfort me ?
The wide grey sky or the wide grey sea ?
 Or Love that lingers afar ?

But Love has no help for my heart's behoof ;
'The sky is flat as a prison-roof,
 Hopeless of moon or star.
Oh sea take my heart in thy waves and beat
Its passion out at the tardy feet
 Of Love that lingers afar.

Thou shouldst not sorrow, sad wind, but I,
But I, oh I ; for canst thou not fly
 And follow thy wish over border and bar ?
Thou, soulless wind, canst arise and go,
While my wild desire is too faint and slow
 To reach him who lingers afar.

A Song



LAST night I met my own true love
Walking in Paradise ;
A halo shone above his hair,
A glory in his eyes.

We sat and sang in alleys green
And heard the angels play ;
Believe me, this was true last night
Though it is false to-day.

Paradise Fancies



I.

THROUGH Paradise garden
A minstrel strays,
An old golden viol
For ever he plays.

Birds fly to his head,
Beasts lie at his feet,
For none of God's angels
Make music so sweet.

And here, far from Eden,
And lonely and mute,
I listen and long :
For my heart is the lute !

II.

On the topmost branch of the Tree of Life
There hung a ripe red apple,
The angels singing underneath
All praised its crimson dapple.

PARADISE FANCIES

They plucked it once to play at ball,
But 'mid the shouts and laughter
The apple fell o'er Heaven's edge,
Sad angels looking after.

And while they smiled to see it rest
Beside a peaceful chapel,
An old priest flung it farther still,
"Bah, what a battered apple!"

III.

Sing, oh the flowers in Paradise :
Rose, lily and girasole !
In all the fields of Paradise
Every flower is a soul.

A climbing bindweed you are there
With petals lily-fine,
Around my rose-bush pink and fair
Your curling tendrils twine.

Too close those slender tendrils cling,
So close I cannot breathe !
Till o'er my dead red roses swing,
Your lilies wreath on wreath.

A Dialogue



She. THE dandelions in the grass
Are blown to fairies' clocks ;
On this green bank I pluckt (Alas)
The last of lady-smocks.

He. Let them die,
What care I ?
Roses come when field flowers pass.

She. But these sun-sated sultry hours
Will make your roses fall :
Their large wide-open crimson flowers
Must die like daisies small.

He. Sweet as yet !
I'll forget
(When they die) they lived at all !

Le Roi Est Mort



AND shall I weep that Love's no more,
And magnify his reign ?
Sure never mortal man before,
Would have his grief again.
Farewell the long-continued ache,
The days a-dream, the nights awake !
I will rejoice and merry make,
And never more complain.

King Love is dead and gone for aye,
Who ruled with might and main,
For with a bitter word one day,
I found my tyrant slain,
And he in Heathenesse was bred,
Nor ever was baptized, 'tis said,
Nor is of any creed, and dead
Can never rise again !

Lethe



COME with me to Lethe-lake,
Come, since Love is o'er,
He whose thirst those waters slake,
Thirsteth nevermore.
There the sleepy hemlock grows
In the night-shade ranks,
Crimson poppies rows on rows
Flush its quiet banks.

Drink with me of Lethe-lake
Deep and deeper yet,
Drink with me for dead Love's sake
Drink till we forget.
Since our roses all are dead,
Lost our laurel-boughs,
Let these poppies hang instead
Round our aching brows.

A Rifiorita



FLOWERS in the wall !

How could he leave the house where he was born ?

(We children played together

In warm or wintry weather)

How could he leave the house where he was born ?

I count the stones for him and love them all.

Flowers on the stone !

The Siren loves the sea, but I the Past !

(We children played together

In warm or wintry weather)

The Siren loves the sea, but I the Past ;

Upon my rock I sing alone, alone.

A Pastoral



It was Whit Sunday yesterday,
The neighbours met at church to pray ;
But I remembered it was May
And went a-wandering far away.

I rested on a shady lawn,
Behind I heard green branches torn,
And through the gap there looked a Faun,
Green ivy hung from either horn.

We built ourselves a flowery house
With roof and walls of tangled boughs,
But whilst we sat and made carouse
The church bells drowned our songs and vows.

The light died out and left the sky,
We sighed and rose and said goodbye.
We had forgotten—He and I,
That he was dead, that I must die.

Dawn-Angels



ALL night I watched awake for morning,
At last the East grew all a-flame,
The birds for welcome sang, or warning,
And with their singing morning came.

Along the gold-green heavens drifted
Pale wandering souls that shun the light,
Whose cloudy pinions torn and rifted,
Had beat the bars of Heaven all night.

These clustered round the moon, but higher
A troop of shining spirits went,
Who were not made of wind or fire,
But some divine dream-element.

Some held the Light, while those remaining
Shook out their harvest-coloured wings
A faint unusual music raining
(Whose sound was Light) on earthly things.

They sang, and as a mighty river
Their voices washed the night away,
From East to West ran one white shiver,
And waxen strong their song was Day.

To a Dragon Fly



You hail from Dream-land, Dragon-fly ?
A stranger hither ? so am I.
And (sooth to say) I wonder why
 We either of us came !
Are you (that shine so bright i' the air)
King Oberon's state-messenger ?
Come tell me how my old friends fare,
 Is Dream-land still the same ?

Who won the latest tourney fight,
King Arthur, or the red-cross Knight ?
Or he who bore away the bright
 Renown'd Mambrino's casque ?
Is Caliban king's councillor yet ?
Cross Mentor jester still and pet ?
Is Suckling out of love and debt ?
 Has Spenser done his task ?

Say, have they settled over there,
Which is the loveliest Guinevere,
Or Gloriana or the fair
 Young Queen of Oberon's Court ?
And does Titania torment still
Mike Drayton and sweet-throated Will ?
In sooth of her amours 'twas ill
 To make such merry sport.

TO A DRAGON FLY

Ah, I have been too long away !
No doubt I shall return some day,
But now I'm lost in love and may
 Not leave my Lady's sight.
Mine is (of course) the happier lot,
Yet—tell them I forget them not,
My pretty gay compatriot,
 When you go home to-night.

Song of a Stormy Night



In my pale garden yesternight
The statues glimmered ghostly-white,
The brooding trees that haunted me
Flapped dusky wings despairingly.

Both air and sky death-heavy were,
But oh my heart was heavier,
For life (I said) is useless grief,
And death an undesired relief.

Then the wind rushed up
Clad in darkness and hail,
Whirling the rain
As a rent white veil,
But my heart, my heart,
Was glad of the gale.

The roar of the wind
Grew hoarser and higher,
Till the thunder spoke
And its voice was fire.
But my heart was freed
From the storm of desire.

My lilies passion-sweet are dead,
Love's purple, royal roses shed,
But heart and garden are besprent
With flowers of patience and content.

Two Sisters

(BIRTHDAY VERSES)



AND must I welcome in the day,
Mabel, that wrongs us two—
That takes your childish years away
And buries mine anew?
The churlish day! I would not give
A quatrain to it, as I live,
But that it gave us you.

Wherefore, O day, I will forget
As best I can the wrong,
And strive in verses neatly set,
Smooth lines and ordered song,
To sing (as truly as who sings
The praise of other ruling kings)
A welcome loud and long.

But first of all be deaf a space
While I call back (in vain)
The presence and the dearer face
Of her whose closing reign
You triumph over. Ah, farewell
Dear Childhood! Listen, while I tell
Your beauties once again.

TWO SISTERS

Dear banished Childhood ! now to us
You seem a rarer thing
Than aught of good or glorious
The coming years can bring.
Take back these older selves again !
Bring Mab and Nannie in the lane
Playing at queen and king !

For you were Louis, Mabel, then,
And I was Antoinette.
You, tall and strong, a king of men ;
I, less ; but don't forget
I always showed at hint of fear
γυναικὸς ἀνδρόβουλον κῆρ,
When *your* eyes would be wet !

Do you remember how we left
The shelter of the shed,
Our foes upon us right and left,
And tow'rs the duck-pond fled ?
You shrank. "Fly, Louis !" I cried, "for best
Is honour !" . . . Green waves heard the rest
Gurgling above my head.

But you were first at climbing trees,
At vaulting o'er the gate,
And you were not afraid of bees,
You rode the pony straight,
And once you took the fence, and then,
Laughing, you leapt it back again ;
An Amazon of eight !

And you were kinder too than I,
For often when we played,
My taste for tears and tragedy
Would make your soul afraid.
Your pirates never felt the lash,
Your blackamoors would always wash
As white as any maid.

TWO SISTERS

And often when I was not well
You'd bring to give me ease
Such tempting gifts ! a crab-apple,
Some unripe pods of peas,
Nasturtium berries, heavy bread
That you had made yourself, you said,
And gum from damson trees !

How sorrowful you used to look,
And mind much more than I,
When grown-up people showered rebuke
On sins that made you cry.
Ah ! you were good and I was not :
What made you weep would make me plot
Revenge and Tragedy !

You used to think me very wise,
I thought you very fair,
For each seemed in the other's eyes
A creature strange and rare.
All that I read I told to you,
And rhymed you strings of verses too
About your golden hair.

Verses more eloquent by far
Than these I write to-day,
Your either eye was then a star,
Your cheek the bloom of May.
I twined flower-fancies round your name—
Yet those and these both mean the same
Though writ another way.

Lovers



So glad am I, my only Love,
So glad that I could fly
Above the clouds and far enough—
Join hands, and let us try !

We'll watch the world that spins below
Amid a mist of stars ;
Along the milky way we'll go
Towards the heavenly bars.

And, smiling soft at one another,
Sweet angels looking o'er
Shall cry, "These lovers love each other ;
Never were such before !"

London Studies



OUTSIDE THE MUSEUM

ALL day it rained, but now the air
Is clear and fine.
The sunset glow has fallen where
The wet streets shine ;
They take the colours of the west,
The gold and rose.
Yet over head, I think, is best,
Where softly glows
A space of luminous tender blue,
But flaked with fire,
As though the perfect peace there knew
A pure desire.
Beneath the fluted columns rise,
With grey, broad frieze ;
And every dove that coos and flies
Is grey as these.

AFTER THE STORM IN MARCH

HARK ! how the wind sighs out of sight
Sorrow and warning.
It raged and wrestled in pain all night,
It sighs at morning.

LONDON STUDIES

The very trees where the wild winds wreak
The wrongs of the city,
Groan and creak as they fain would speak
Pardon and pity.

Heart, keep silence ; forebode no more
Warning and sorrow.
Who knows, the heavens may hold in store
Spring for to-morrow.

Thanksgiving for Flowers



You bring me flowers—behold my shaded room
Is grown all glorious and alive with Light.
Moonshine of pallid primroses, and bright
Daffodil-suns that light the way o' the tomb.

You bring me dreams—through sleep's close-lidded
gloom,
Sad violets mourn for Sappho all the night,
Where purple saffrons make antique delight
Mid crown'd memorials of Narcissus' doom.

A scent of herbs now sets me musing on
Men dead i' the fennel-beds on Marathon :
My flowers, my dreams and I shall lie as dead !

Flowers fade, dreams wake, men die ; but never
dies
The soul whereby these things were perfected,—
It leaves the world on flower with memories.

Maiden Love



OH Love, and hast thou conquered my proud heart
That did so long deny thy sovereignty?
Hast given lordship and command of me
Even to another, lesser than thou art?
Whose footfall bids the shameful blood upstart
To my pale cheeks and beat so clamorously
About my head, I cannot hear or see
Whose coming 'tis that bids my life depart.

Ah me ! my heart is as an instrument
That only answers one musician's hand,
A vision one alone may represent,
A cipher but one sage can understand,
Yet to this one as blank, as dull, as far,
As such dead things to their possessors are !

Love, Death, and Art



LORD, give me Love ! give me the silent bliss
Of meeting souls, of answering eyes and hands ;
The comfort of one heart that understands ;
The thrill and rapture of Love's sealing kiss.

Or grant me—lest I weary of all this—
The quiet of Death's unimagined lands,
Wherein the longed-for Tree of Knowledge stands,
Where Thou art, Lord—and the great mysteries.

Nay, let me sing, my God, and I'll forego,
Love's smiling mouth, Death's sweetlier smiling
eyes.

Better my life long mourn in glorious woe,
Than love unheard in a mute Paradise—

For no grief, no despair, can quail me long,
While I can make these sweet to me in song.

Sonnet



God sent a poet to reform His earth.
But when he came and found it cold and poor,
Harsh and unlovely, where each prosperous boor
Held poets light for all their heavenly birth,
He thought—Myself can make one better worth
The living in than this—full of old lore,
Music and light and love, where Saints adore
And Angels, all within mine own soul's girth.

But when at last he came to die, his soul
Saw earth (flying past to Heaven), with new love,
And all the unused passion in him cried :
O God, your Heaven I know and weary of.
Give me this world to work in and make whole.
God spoke : Therein, thou fool, hast lived and
died !

Fons Vitæ



I.

I LAY and dreamed beside a stream's well-head,
And praised the waters cool beyond compare ;
My fain lips met a fresher likeness there
But drank a draught as salt as tears new shed.
And, knowing from no sea the stream was fed,
I wondered greatly, as I grew aware
How wearily a wayworn people fare
For evermore beside that river's bed.

For, silently as walk the fleshless dead,
They went along, and each one on his head
Held straight a water-jar ; no two the same,
Yet e'en the least a burden hard to bear,
And each, when to the river's spring he came,
Poured from his urn its weight of water there.

II.

I saw them pass me, ghostly, hollow-eyed,
With faces dreamy-still, forlorn of pain,
And did not dare to break their solemn chain
Till, bold with fear, I thought : Whate'er betide

FONS VITÆ

This secret I must learn—and trembling cried :
Oh ye wind-walking wanderers I am fain
To know ye and your fate, are ye dead men ?
Or exiled souls whose bodies have not died ?

Then one made answer : We are they that grieved
Through God's decree, that grieved and murmured
not,

Nor would forestall the end that He reprieved ;
And after Death, ere Life be quite forgot
We gather all our outgrown loss and fears
And feed the stream of Life with these our tears.

The Cup of Life



In the cup of life, 'tis true,
Dwells a draught of bitter dew—

Disenchantment, sorrow, pain,
Hunger that no bread can still,
Dreary dawns that dawn in vain,
Hopes that torture, joys that kill.

Yet no other cup I know
Where such radiant waters glow :

It contains the song of birds,
And the shining of the sun ;
And the sweet unspoken words
We have dreamed of, every one ;

Love of women, minds of men.—
Take the cup, nor break it, then.

Love and Vision



My love is more than life to me ;
And you look on and wonder
In what can that illusion be
You think I labour under.

Yet you, too, have you never gone,
Some wet and yellow even,
Where russet moors reach on and on
Beneath a windy heaven ?

Brown moors, which, at the western edge,
A watery sunset brushes,
With misty rays yon cloudy ledge
Casts down upon the rushes.

You see no more ; but shade your eyes,
Forget the showery weather,
Forget the wet, tempestuous skies
And look upon the heather.

O fairyland, fairyland !
It sparkles, lives, and dances,
By every gust swayed down and fanned,
And every rain-drop glances.

LOVE AND VISION

Never in jewel or wine the light
Burned like the purple heather ;
And some is palest pink, some white,
Swaying and dancing together.

Every stem is sharp and clear,
Every bell is ringing,
No doubt, some tune we do not hear
For the thrushes' sleepy singing.

Over all, like the bloom on a grape,
The lilac seeding-grasses
Have made a haze, vague, without shape,
For the wind to change as it passes.

Under all is the budding ling,
Grey-green with scarlet notches,
Bossed with many a mossy thing,
And gold with lichen-blotches.

Here and there slim rushes stand
Aslant as carried lances.
I saw it, and called it fairyland ;
You never saw it, the chance is ?

Brown moors and stormy skies that kiss
At eve in rainy weather
You saw—but what the heather is
Saw I, who love the heather.

Love Among the Saints



At Assisi is the Church
Well I know the frescoed wall :
Colours dim, Martyrs slim,
Saints you scarcely see at all,
Till the slanting sunbeams search
Through the church,
Waking life where'er they fall.

Every evening wall and vault,
Saint and city, starts and wakes,
One by one, as the sun
Broadens through the dusk, and makes
Greys and reds, and deep cobalt
Of the vault
Teem with Saints, and towers, and lakes.

High among them, clear to see,
Is one stately fresco set ;
There they stand, hand in hand,
Bride and bridegroom gravely met,
Francis and Saint Poverty.
Well I see
All the Saints attending, yet.

LOVE AMONG THE SAINTS

Close their ranks by groom and bride ;
Straight their faces, clear and pure ;
Pale in stain, pale and plain,
Fall their ample robes demure.
Grave, these goodly friends beside,
Stands the bride,
Shorn of every earthly lure.

But, when I was there to look,
Not Saint Agnes nor Saint Clare
(Tall and faint, like a saint)
But a naked captive there
Fast my wandering fancy took ;
Still I look,
Vainly, for that face and hair.

For, amid the saintly light,
From the faded fresco starts,
Fair and pale, thin and frail,
Round his neck â chain of hearts,
Love himself in mazed affright,
Out of sight
Of his altar and his darts.

Starved and naked, wan and thin,
Beautiful in his distress,
Crouches Love, whom above
All the saints in glory bless.
Here he may not enter in,
Cold and thin,
Naked, with no wedding-dress.

From the altar and the shrine
One turns round in frowning grace,
Bids the wild, naked child,
Swiftly leave the holy place.
Not for thee the bread and wine
On the shrine,
Starving god of alien race !

LOVE AMONG THE SAINTS

Yet, O Warder, was it wise
Thus to spurn him ? Was it well ?
Love is strong, lasting long,
Him thou canst not bind in Hell ;
Scourge him, burn, he never dies,
Phœnix-wise
Riseth he unconquerable.

Only martyred Love returns
With an altered face and air ;
Not a child, sweet and mild,
Fit for daily kiss and care,
But a spirit which aches and burns,
Swift he turns
All your visions to despair.

Love you cannot reach or find,
Love that aches within the soul,
Vague and faint, till the Saint
Cries, beyond his own control,
For some answer that his blind
Heart can find
But in its own vain diastole.

Ah, beware ! That phantom Love
Drives to madness, and destroys.
Yet, to all Love must call,
Only we may choose the voice.
And whate'er we are or prove,
Loathe or love,
Hangs upon that instant's choice !

The Springs of Fontana



THE springs of Fontana well high on the mountain,
Out of the rock of the granite they pour

Twenty or more ;

Ripple and runnel and freshet and fountain

Well, happy tears, from the heart of the mountain

Up at Fontana.

See, not a step can we take but a spring

Breaks from the roots of the blond-flower'd chestnuts—

(Look, in the water their long golden breast-knots

Flung in caress !)—from a tuft of the ling,

From a stone, anything,

Up at Fontana.

Twenty or more, and no one of the twenty

Gushes the same ; here the waters abundant

Babble redundant,

Filling the vale with the bruit of their plenty ;

Here a mere ripple, a trickle, a scanty

Dew on Fontana.

Surely one noonday the Prophet in heaven

Slept, and the wand of the desert fell—

THE SPRINGS OF FONTANA

Fell to the rock, and the rock was riven.
Lo, all around it eternally well
(A miracle !)
The springs of Fontana.

Waters of boon !
Deluge or drought cannot alter your current,
Swift in December and icy in June,
Full when the icicle hangs on the torrent,
Full when the river is dry and the noon
Parches Fontana.

Over the rocks !
Over the tree-root that tangles and blocks—
Robbing from all that resists you a sunny
Scent of the cistus and rock-hidden honey,
Yarrow, campanula, thyme, agrimony—
Flow from Fontana !

Flow, happy waters, and gather and rally,
Rush to the plain.
Flow to the heavenly fields of Limain,
Blue as a dream in the folds of the valley ;
Feed them and fatten with blossom and grain,
Springs of Fontana !

Rivers of springs,
Born many times in renewal unending,
Bright, irresistible, purest of things,
Blessing the rocks that oppose you, befriending
Pastures and cattle and men in your wending
Forth from Fontana.

Born (who knows how ?) a mysterious fountain
Out of the stone and the dust of the mountain,
Bound to a country we know little of,
How shall I bless ye and praise ye enough,
Image of Love,
Springs of Fontana !

Serenade



Moon of my soul, arise !

Ah me, the moon, the moon goes out in clouds ;

Lo, a great darkness all the heaven shrouds

And night is in mine eyes.

Star of my life, appear !

Ah, not a star, not one is lit on high—

Only along the edges of the sky

There slants a falling sphere.

The Frozen River



THE silver-powdered willows of the Quai
Rise frosty-clear against the roseate skies,
The winter sunlight mellows ere it dies
And lingers where the frozen river lies.

Between the hurrying wharves, a sheet of grey
It sleeps beneath the parapet of stone :
A sudden desolation, empty, lone
And silent with a silence of its own.

All round the city vast and loud and gay !
. . . If one should weary of the press and din
And venture here, beware ! the crust is thin ;
One step—and lo, the Abyss would draw him in.

Athwart the happiest lives of every day
Beside the Lovers' Walk, the household mart,
Think ye there lies no silent road apart ?
No mute and frozen Chasm of the heart ?

Neurasthenia



I WATCH the happier people of the house
Come in and out, and talk, and go their ways ;
I sit and gaze at them ; I cannot rouse
My heavy mind to share their busy days.

I watch them glide, like skaters on a stream,
Across the brilliant surface of the world.
But I am underneath : they do not dream
How deep below the eddying flood is whirl'd.

They cannot come to me, nor I to them ;
But, if a mightier arm could reach and save,
Should I forget the tide I had to stem ?
Should I, like these, ignore the abysmal wave ?

Yes ! in the radiant air how could I know
How black it is, how fast it is, below ?

Song



THE great things that I love I cannot do !
The little things I do I cannot love . . .
I never knew
Our earth so vain, so void the heavens above.

A dream in daytime, aimlessly I rove,
And wander through
A world whose wonders are not vast enough
To hide one haunting image from my view.

And nought, I find, is sweet, and nothing true ;
And one dream, only, worth the dreaming of . . .
O Love, my Love,
If I could give my life and die for you !

Night



O NIGHT eternal and blue,
Holy and soft above,
You seem to lay on my forehead
The touch of an infinite love —

The touch of a love that never
Will understand me aright—
Why should you touch me and love me,
O tender and delicate night?

O night, look in with your stars
On the wintry face of despair,
And your stars will eddy and shrivel
As leaves in a gust of the air!

Song



Oh for the wings of a dove,
To fly far away from my own soul,
Reach and be merged in the vast whole
Heaven of infinite Love !

Oh that I were as the rain,
To fall and be lost in the great sea,
One with the waves, till the drowned Me
Might not be severed again !

Infinite arms of the air,
Surrounding the stars and without strife
Blending our life with their large life,
Lift me and carry me there !

Sonnet



SINCE childhood have I dragged my life along
The dusty purlieus and approach of Death,
Hoping the years would bring me easier breath,
And turn my painful sighing to a song.

But, ah, the years have done me cruel wrong,
For they have robbed me of that happy faith ;
Still in the world of men I move a wraith,
Who to the shadow-world not yet belong.

Too long, indeed, I linger here and take
The room of others but to droop and sigh ;
Wherefore, O spinning sisters, for my sake,
No more the little tangled knots untie ;
But all the skein, I do beseech you, break,
And spin a stronger thread more perfectly.

The Departure



THE night wears on, the lawns are grey with dew,
The Easter of the dawn will soon be here :
And I must leave the happy world I knew,
And front the Heaven I worship and I fear.

Dawn that in awe and trembling I desire,
Bloom in the skies as flaming and as bright
As Enoch saw the chariot-wheels of fire
Divide the darkness of the desert night.

Ah, when beside that palm tree in the sand
The fiery swiftmess trembled, did his will
Grow faint, to leave the long familiar land ?
Or did he feel a dizzier terror still
Lest, like a dream, that chariot should be gone
And leave him in the wilderness alone ?

Going South



A LITTLE grey swallow,
I fled to the vales
Of the nightingales
And the haunts of Apollo.

Behind me lie the sheer white cliffs, the hollow
Green waves that break at home, the northern
gales,
The oaks above the homesteads in the vales,
For all my home is far, and cannot follow.

O nightingale voices !
O lemons in flower !
O branches of laurel !

You all are here, but ah not here my choice is :
Fain would I pluck one pink-vein'd bloom of
sorrel,
Or watch the wrens build in our hazel bower.

Love in the World



THE olives where we walk to-day
In the olive-groves are white and grey,
And underneath the shimmering trees
One almond-bough is faintly pink,
And lilac blow the anemones.

In all the flowers, in all the leaves,
The secret of their pallor heaves :
A tender hint of vanished bliss.

A rapture just beyond the brink
Of feeling, which we still must miss.

Perhaps when we are dead, my dear,
Our phantoms still shall wander here,
And breathe in this Elysian wood
(As others breathe for us, I think),
A beauty dimly understood.

Three Songs



I.

A HEART as deep as the sea,
A heart as vast as the sky,
Thou shouldest have given to me,
O Spirit, since I must die !

For how shall I feel and attain
The joy and the fear and the strife,
The hope of the world and the pain
In the few short years of a life ?

II.

The flocks that bruise the mountain grass
Send out beneath their feet
Such thymy fragrance as they pass,
That all the fell is sweet.

Sometimes a stranger breathes thy name,
O Love of long ago !
And in my heart there leaps to flame
A long-remembered woe.

III.

Thou sentest them an angel, Lord,
Since they were precious in Thine eyes,
An angel with a flaming sword,
To drive them out of Paradise.

For thus they kept the dream of bliss,
The hope in something out of sight,
Nor ever knew how sad it is
To weary of our best delight.

The Dead Friend



I.

WHEN you were alive, at least,
There were days I never met you.
In the study, at the feast,
By the hearth, I could forget you.

Moods there were of many days
When, methinks, I did not mind you.
Now, oh now, in any place
Wheresoe'er I go, I find you !

You . . . but how profoundly changed,
O you dear-belov'd dead woman !
Made mysterious and estranged,
All-pervading, superhuman.

Ah ! to meet you as of yore,
Kind, alert, and quick to laughter :
You, the friend I loved Before ;
Not this tragic friend of After.

THE DEAD FRIEND

II.

The house was empty where you came no more ;
I sat in awe and dread ;
When, lo ! I heard a hand that shook the door,
And knew it was the Dead.

One moment—ah !—the anguish took my side,
The fainting of the will.
“ God of the living, leave me not ! ” I cried,
And all my flesh grew chill.

One moment ; then I opened wide my heart
And open flung the door :
“ What matter whence thou comest, what thou art ?—
Come to me ! ” . . . Nevermore.

III.

They lie at peace, the darkness fills
The hollow of their empty gaze.
The dust falls in their ears and stills
The echo of our fruitless days ;

The earth takes back their baser part ;
The brain no longer bounds the dream ;
The broken vial of the heart
Lets out its passion in a stream.

And in this silence that they have
One inner vision grows more bright :
The Dead remember in the grave
As I remember here to-night.

An Orchard at Avignon



THE hills are white, but not with snow :
They are as pale in summer time,
For herb or grass may never grow
Upon their slopes of lime.

Within the circle of the hills
A ring, all flowering in a round,
An orchard-ring of almond fills
The plot of stony ground.

More fair than happier trees, I think,
Grown in well-watered pasture land
These parched and stunted branches, pink
Above the stones and sand.

O white, austere, ideal place,
Where very few will care to come,
Where spring hath lost the waving grace
She wears for us at home !

Fain would I sit and watch for hours
The holy whiteness of thy hills,
Their wreath of pale auroral flowers,
Their peace the silence fills.

A place of secret peace thou art,
Such peace as in an hour of pain
One moment fills the amazed heart,
And never comes again.

Twilight



WHEN I was young the twilight seemed too long.

How often on the western window seat
I leaned my book against the misty pane
And spelled the last enchanting lines again,
The while my mother hummed an ancient song,
Or sighed a little and said : "The hour is sweet !"
When I, rebellious, clamoured for the light.

But now I love the soft approach of night,
And now with folded hands I sit and dream
While all too fleet the hours of twilight seem ;
And thus I know that I am growing old.

O granaries of Age ! O manifold
And royal harvest of the common years !
There are in all thy treasure-house no ways
But lead by soft descent and gradual slope
To memories more exquisite than Hope.
Thine is the Iris born of olden tears,
And thrice more happy are the happy days
That live divinely in thy lingering rays.

TWILIGHT

So autumn roses bear a lovelier flower ;
So in the emerald after-sunset hour
The orchard wall and trembling aspen trees
Appear an infinite Hesperides.
Ay, as at dusk we sit with folded hands,
Who knows, who cares in what enchanted lands
We wander while the undying memories throng ?

When I was young the twilight seemed too long.

Retrospect



HERE, beside my Paris fire, I sit alone and ponder
All my life of long ago that lies so far asunder ;
“Here, how came I thence ?” I say, and greater grows
the wonder
As I recall the farms and fields and placid hamlets
yonder.

. . . See, the meadowsweet is white against the water-
courses,
Marshy lands are kingcup-gay and bright with streams
and sources ;
Dew-bespangled shines the hill where half abloom the
gorse is,
And all the northern fallows steam beneath the plough-
ing horses.

There's the red-brick-chimneyed house, the ivied haunt
of swallows,
All its garden up and down and full of hills and
hollows ;
Past the lawn, the sunken fence whose brink the laurel
follows,
And then the knee-deep pasture where the herd for
ever wallows !

RETROSPECT

So they've cut the lilac bush ; a thousand thousand
pities !

'Twas the blue old-fashioned sort that never grows in
cities.

There we little children played and chaunted aimless
ditties,

While oft the old grandsire looked at us and smiled
his Nunc Dimittis !

Green, O green with ancient peace, and full of sap
and sunny,

Lusty fields of Warwickshire, O land of milk and
honey,

Might I live to pluck again a spike of agrimony,
A silver tormentilla leaf or ladysmock upon ye !

Patience, for I keep at heart your pure and perfect
seeming,

I can see you wide awake as clearly as in dreaming,
Softer, with an inner light, and dearer, to my deeming,
Than when beside your brooks at noon I watched the
sallows gleaming !

Foreign Spring



THE charlock and the hemlock flowers
Have hung their laces o'er the green ;
The buttercups are bright and sheen
As though the Spring were ours.

But through the poplar-rank there shines
The white interminable way ;
And down the hill the budding vines
Go softly gloved in grey.

Amid a purer loftier sky
The foreign sun burns far and bright :
. . . O mistier fields ! O tenderer light !
I pause awhile and sigh.

The Sibyl



BEHOLD, the old earth is young again !
The blackthorn whitens in the rain,
The flowers come baffling wind and hail,
The gay, wild nightingale
Cries out his heart in wood and vale.
(*And in my heart there rises too*
A dim free longing
For some delight I never knew !)

O Spring, thou art a subtle thing,
Wiser than we, thou Sibyl, Spring !
Thy tresses blown across our face
In Life's mid-race
Remind us of some holier place—
(*And unawares the dullest find*
A new religion
That all their doubts have left behind !)

Epthatha



FOR miles beyond the orange river
The olive orchards gleam and shiver,
And, at the river's brink as pale,
The ranks of moonlit rushes quiver.

And somewhere in a hidden vale
The unseen and secret nightingale
Her olden woe doth still deliver,
Though all the orchards know the tale.

O magic of the South ! Whenever
Your sweet dissolving breezes sever
About my heart the bands of mail,
I too would sing, and sing for ever !

Serena

(In the forests of Paraguay there grows a plant which the peasants call Serena, quite unnoticeable and yet of a perfume so attractive that those who have plucked the flower by accident are said henceforth to roam the woods incessantly in quest of another blossom.)



IN Paraguayan forests there's a flower
The shepherds call Serena.
 (Of all that blooms on herb or tree
 Serena is the flower for me!)
The white magnolia on her brazen tower,
The lemon-fresh verbena
And roses where their purple clusters shower
Are nothing to Serena!

For where the wild liana shrouds the forest
In darkness, under cover,
 Serena grows, so pure and small
 You never notice her at all.
No herborist, no botanist, no florist,
Hath cared to con thee over
Thou little lonely blossom that abhorrest
The gazes of thy lover!

SERENA

But here and there methinks a weary shepherd,
In quest of dewy blossom,
 Stoops down to pluck the grass in flower
 Beneath a white acacia-bower,
To cool some ancient scar of ape or leopard,
 Some bite of snake or 'possum ;
And lo ! he starts and smiles, the happy shepherd,
Serena in his bosom !

And through his veins there steals a subtle wonder,
A magic melancholy
 (So faint a sense, it cannot be
 A hope nor yet a memory),
But something haunts the bough he slumbers under
That makes it rare and holy,
And lo ! the shadows are a thing to ponder,
And every herb the Moly ! . . .

Or else (who knows ?) some lithe and amber maiden
Who steals to meet her lover
 Goes singing with an idle art
 To ease the gladness at her heart,
Along the sombre paths and cypress-shaden
Deep glades the roses cover,
And fills her arms with garlands heavy laden
The dewdrops sprinkle over.

But, in the crown she binds, her slender fingers
Have set the undreamed-of flower ;
 And from that moment she forgets
 Her lover and her carcanets ;
Nor any more she sings among the singers,
But wanders hour on hour
Deep in the wood and deeper, where there lingers
The secret and the power ! . . .

Now he and she shall wander at the leading
Of one enchanted vision,
 Recall the thing they have not seen,
 Remember what hath never been,

SERENA

And seek in vain the flower they plucked unheeding,
And scorn with mild derision
The roses where the happy bees are feeding
Or lily-beds Elysian.

O undiscovered blossom, slight and wan, set
So deep in forest closes,
Be mine, who ever, as thou know'st,
The least apparent loved the most :
Low music at the first faint-breathing onset,
The summer when it closes,
The silvery moonrise better than the sunset,
And thee than autumn roses !

A French Lily



SWEET Iphigenia-soul of every day,
Fair vine so trellised to the parent-stay
Thou hast no single force, no separate will,
But leaning grow'st, and, flowering, leanest still ;
In that walled garden where thou dwell'st alone
Thou art the whitest blossom ever known !

Less full and ample than our English rose
Whose generous freshness floods the garden-close,
And less confiding to the gatherer's hand
Than their forget-me-not o' the Fatherland,
Yet, O French Lily, pure and grown apart,
Thee none the less I treasure next my heart !

Spring



SPRING, the tender maiden,
Like a girl who greets her lover,
Comes, her apron laden
Deep with flower and leaf we liked of old ;
Not a sprig forgetting
That we then demanded of her ;
Changing not nor setting
Out of place the tiniest frill or fold.

See, the aspen still is
Hung awry to droop and falter ;
Still the leaves of lilies
Lift aloft their tall and tender sheath.
Wiser than the sages,
Spring would never dare to alter
What so many ages
Showed already right in bloom and wreath.

Ah, could Spring remember
Every thrill and fancy perished
In the soul's December ;
Lost for ever, faded from the truth !
Holy things and tender,
Dead, alas ! however cherished.
Breathe, O Spring, and render
That forgotten radiance of our youth !

Maidens



O RARE bright courage of the stars
That pierce the abysmal depth of night !
Lo, dancing Hesper, Vega, Mars !
And all the heavens pulse with light.

So maidens in a world of woe
Smile unafraid, and, smiling, save ;
As fair, as innocently brave
As almonds flowering in the snow !

Adam and Eve

WHEN Adam fell asleep in Paradise
He made himself a helpmeet as he dreamed ;
And, lo ! she stood before his waking eyes,
And was the woman that his vision seemed.

She knelt beside him there in tender awe
To find the living fountain of her soul,
And so in either's eyes the other saw
The light they missed in Heaven, and knew the
goal.

Thrice-blessed Adam, husband of thine Eve !
She brought thee for her dowry death and shame ;
She taught thee one may worship and deceive ;
But yet thy dream and she were still the same ;
Nor ever in the desert turned thine eyes
Towards Lilith by the brooks of Paradise.

Writing History



THE profit of my living long ago
I dedicated to the unloving dead,
Though all my service they shall never know
Whose world is vanished and their name unsaid.

For none remembers now the good, the ill
They did, the deeds they thought should last for aye ;
But in the little room my voice can fill
They shall not be forgotten till I die.

So, in a lonely churchyard by the shore,
The sea winds drift the sand across the mounds
And those forgotten graves are found no more,
And no man knows the churchyard's holy bounds ;

Till one come by and stoop with reverent hands
To clear the graves of their encumbering sands.

Soldiers Passing



ALONG the planetree-dappled pearly street,
Full flooded with the gay Parisian light,
I watch the people gather, left and right,
Far off I hear the clarion shrilling sweet ;

Nearer and nearer comes the tramp of feet ;
And, while the soldiers still are out of sight,
Over the crowd the wave of one delight
Breaks, and transfigures all the dusty heat.

So have I seen the western Alps turn rose
When the reflection of the rising sun
Irradiates all their peaks and woods and snows.

Even so this various nation blends in one
As down the street the sacred banner goes,
And every Frenchman feels himself its son !

The Bookworm



THE whole day long I sit and read
Of days when men were men indeed
 And women knightlier far :
I fight with Joan of Arc ; I fall
With Talbot ; from my castle-wall
 I watch the guiding star . . .

But when at last the twilight falls
And hangs about the book-lined walls
 And creeps across the page,
Then the enchantment goes, and I
Close up my volumes with a sigh
 To greet a narrower age.

Home through the pearly dusk I go
And watch the London lamplight glow
 Far off in wavering lines :
A pale grey world with primrose gleams,
And in the West a cloud that seems
 My distant Apennines.

O Life ! so full of truths to teach,
Of secrets I shall never reach,
 O world of Here and Now ;
Forgive, forgive me, if a voice,
A ghost, a memory be my choice
 And more to me than Thou !

Melancholia

(For an engraving by Albrecht Dürer)



So many years I toiled like Caliban
To fetch the stones and earth to build my fane ;
So many years I thought before the brain
Reluctant would divulge the final plan.

Years upon years to forge the invented tools
Novel, as all my temple should be new ;
Years upon years to fashion and to hew
The stones that should astound a world of fools.

Now shall I build ? *Cui bono* ?—lo, the salt
Hath lost its savour and I have no will :
What reck I now of gate or dome or vault ?

Among the ruins of the thing undone
I sit and ask myself *Cui bono* ? till
The sun sets, and a bat flies past the sun.

Song



I HAVE lost my singing-voice ;
 My heyday's over.
No more I lilt my cares and joys,
 But keep them under cover.
 My heyday's gone :
 I sit and look on :
Life rushes by with a sob and a moan.

Wherefore should I care to tell
 The pang that rends me ?
If it leave me, all is well ;
 And if it last, it ends me.
 The tears that rise
 And prick in mine eyes
Drop for a world full of hunger and sighs.

Old Songs



THIS song I wrote—ah me, how long ago !
When up the stair of Heaven and down again
(For even then I could not long remain),
With happy feet I used to come and go.

This ode I sang beneath a laurel-bough
Where I had sought for Truth among the dead ;
This little verse (and still the page is red),
To soothe some easier pang forgotten now.

I took the dew of lilies grown apart ;
The scanty wine of amphoras ; and, bright
And clear, the blood that flows from trivial scars ;

But with the bitter ink of mine own heart
I have not written and I must not write,
Let rust and acid dim the eternal stars.

To my Muse

THE vast Parnassus never knew thy face,
O Muse of mine, O frail and tender elf
That dancest in a moonbeam to thyself
Where olives rustle in a lonely place !

And yet . . . thou hast a sort of Tuscan grace ;
Thou may'st outlive me ! Some unborn Filelf
One day may range thee on his studious shelf
With Lenau, Leopardi, and their race.

And so, some time, the sole sad scholar's friend,
The melancholy comrade of his dreams,
Thou may'st, O Muse, escape a little while
The none the less inevitable end :
Take heart, therefore, and sing the thing that
seems,
And watch the world's disaster with a smile.

Michaelmas



WE had not thought the sky could burn so blue !
For Summer hath her storms, and Spring her veils ;
But now a crystal fire seems burning through
Yon vault of wide turquoise no vapour pales.

The summer green is changed and manifold :
The cherries and the maples flame in rose,
The beechwood studs the hill with rusty gold,
And yellow bend the trembling poplar-rows.

And all the roses that we mourned for dead
Burst out in flower and bloom from every stalk ;
The purple asters burn amid the red,
And starry dahlias frame the terrace-walk.

Bright apples bow the trees beyond the field,
The meadow-saffron springs among the grass ;
For every branch now bears its ripened yield,
For every floweret feels the summer pass ;

For Venus dances in a frosty sky
At twilight o'er the tawny mountain tops ;
For all things rage and revel ere they die,
And know the hour is near when summer stops.

SONGS OF THE INNER LIFE:
IDEAS AND IMAGES



“Two things fill the soul with an undying, ever-increasing
admiration and respect :
The night with its heaven of stars above us, and, in our
hearts, the Moral Law.”

—EMMANUEL KANT.

Foreword

(TO J. D.)



WHEN I die, all alone,
I shall look at last
For thy tender face, my own,
Thy face, beloved,
So far removèd
From all our happy past . . .

Nay, all day, all day long
Still thou lingerest here . . .
Halting in its muffled song,
Thy voice, unaltered,
Still murmurs, faltered,
The old words still as dear.

Thou art dead, years ago,
Dead and in the grave ;
I am all alone, I know . . .
And yet how often
Thy kind eyes soften,
And smile and guide and save !

Smilest thou, angel-ghost ? . . .
Yet, no heavens ope !
All thou art I had, and lost ;
And now remember
O'er life's dull ember
Nor call my dream a hope.

The Two Lions



Two lions stand upon my path,
Nor noon nor night can hide them ;
And, look I late or look I rath,
I see no way beside them.

And, look I forth or look I back,
I see but fear and sorrow ;
Two lions stand upon my track :
Yesterday and To-morrow.

Religions

(TO M. B.)



I DREAMED we sat—Gabriella, thou and I—
Within thy garden where the roses bloom,
Weaving together at an ancient loom
With beams in profile on a sapphire sky.

We let the roses droop, the lilies die
Unnoticed . . . Each in her appointed room,
We wove a web of fabulous glint and gloom :
A veil for Truth, whose temple stood hard by.

Thine, Margaret, was purpled o'er with flowers,
And Gabriella's rich with mystic bloom,
But mine transparent as are driven showers.

We rose . . . I tore your broideries from the head
And flung my veil across the face of Truth ;
I saw her unadorn'd and woke in dread.

The Lost Sheep



THOU grantest ease of heart, O Lord,
And them that wander in distress
Thou gatherest at thy knees . . .
Thou ledest thy lost sheep apart
Into the paths of pleasantness,
Into the paths of peace.

The Valley of Death was dim, O Light,
And vast the waste of vain desires
Where wandered mine unrest . . .
Thou camest o'er the mountain rim,
Thou foundest me amid the briers
To hush me on thy breast.

O calm, O joy, to lie, O Love,
One moment held against thy heart
In breathless rapt amaze ! . . .
I dared to think that such as I
Should wander nevermore apart,
But pasture in thy rays.

The Valley of Death was cold, O Lord,
And far from thy paternal farms
I mourned and murmured there . . .
But how forsaken is the fold
Where, cast abandoned from thine arms,
I die of my despair !

The Gate of Tears

(TO G. A. S.)



FAR upon the farther side
Of the Gate of Tears
Lies a country calm and wide ;
There is peace at eventide
Far upon the farther side
Of the Gate of Tears.

Never gale or tempest blows
Thro' the Gate of Tears ;
That autumnal valley knows
Neither nightingale nor rose ;
All the hills are crowned with snows
Where the snowdrop peers.

There a broken heart may rest,
Free from hopes or fears,
Undesiring, undistress'd ;
While the sunset in the west
Gilds the worst and greys the best,
Through the Gate of Tears.

Teste Sibylla



With a great cry the Sibyl woke and left
The long walls of Assyrian Babylon,
Wrenching her torn black robes and locks undone
From them that hung upon her right and left.

Pale, shrieking, mad, the curious crowd she cleft
Swift as a homing swallow, and darted on
Thro' leagues of tawny solitude alone,
Propheying a riddle as one bereft . . .

“Not for to-day I speak, but for to-morrow !
Mad, call me ! Liar, call me ! Sage and priest,
To-morrow *I* shall be the fount of Truth !”

But once she faltered, babbling words of ruth
And yearning hope, and a new tender sorrow,
While up in heaven a star rose in the east.

“ Seek, and ye shall Find ”



THE man who learns what Life can teach
Shall see beyond his soul at last ;
Shall mix with all that is and reach
A secret hidden from the past.

The goad that spurs him past his worth
Is self ; yet soon he leaves behind
The shadows and the dust of earth
And reaches tow'rds the Eternal Mind.

'Tis self that spurs him on to truth ;
And Faustus bows a whitening head
Unwearied in the quest for youth,
But finds the laws of life instead.

So Kepler, at a prince's hope
To date a victory in his wars,
Shall cast a captain's horoscope
And note the motion of the stars.

For more than all we ask we find,
And more than triumph ends our strife ;
Seek on, for there are worlds behind,
Seek on and reach the source of Life !

At one with earth and heaven, turn
In widening circles, human soul !
Forget the Here and Now, and learn
At last to contemplate the whole.

Beauty



AND shall not Beauty reign beyond the grave ?
There Life is, Life eternal, there as here :
For none may die, tho' he desire the dear
And dark repose of Death's abysmal wave ;

Thro' Life's unending round for æons still,
Even as we moved, so must we move and
change
Thro' all the marvels of her mystic range :
Sea, rose or tempest, soul or star or hill.

But only here, perchance, we know the grace
Of Beauty and the magic of her dream,
And here I love to watch the things that seem :
The dawn that filters thro' the veils of space ;

The noon that spreads a glare implacable
O'er all the plain, and drives the shepherd
home ;
The peace of forests, and the greeny dome
Of ancient oaks above a holy well.

I hold my breath until the blackbird stops ;
I mark enchanted, past our cottage eaves,
The roses of the sunset shed their leaves
In shining pink upon the mountain tops.

BEAUTY

I watch a lonely fountain dance all night
In silver music to the silent moon ;
While, trembling thro' the milky skies of June,
The stars shine faintly amid the flooding light.

I dream ; I mix divinely soul and earth.
But if hereafter, 'mid the moving stars,
We find thee not in our long avatars,
May I forget thee, O Beauty, and thy dearth !

Rhythm



O BEAT and pause that count the life of man,
Throb of the pulsing heart !
Ripple of tides and stars beyond our scan !
Rhythm o' the ray o' the sun and the red o' the rose !
Thrill of the lightning's dart !
All, all are one beyond this world of shows.

Neither with eyes that see nor ears that hear
May we discern thee here,
Nor comprehend, O Life of life, thy laws,
But all our idols praise the perfect whole ;
And I have worshipped thee, O rhythmic soul,
Chiefly in beat and pause.

O beat and pause that count the life of man,
Throb of the pulsing heart !
Ripple of tides and stars beyond our scan !
Rhythm o' the ray o' the sun and the red o' the rose !
Thrill of the lightning's dart !
Yea, all are one behind our world of shows.

The Valley



WHEN August and the sultry summer's drouth
Parch all the plains and pale the mountain-tops
Where thick the pasture springs,
Unchanged, our valley sloping to the south
Is greener than the Irish isle, and drops
With waterfalls and springs.

The meadows by the river, tall with flowers,
The fountain leaping from the rocks above,
The simple ways of man,
The farms and forests of this vale of ours,
Are such, methinks, as gods and shepherds love,
And wait the flute of Pan.

The vale has seen unchanged a thousand years
Or more, and Mercury might wander back
And find, the same Auverne,
And greet the hollows of the mountain meres
Where round the crater's brim the rocks are
black
Amid the beds of fern.

THE VALLEY

For neither he nor I have ever seen
The lava rushing from the crater's edge,
The rocks cast up like foam ;
Though somehow, as I dreamed amid the green,
I thought I saw, beyond the cypress-hedge,
Those torrents blast my home.

Fire, flood, fierce earthquakes of an elder world,
Red flames and smoke of swirling lava streams,
Tempests of ash and snow,
Whereby the rock I stand upon was hurl'd
Down hither, oft ye haunt, ye haunt my dreams,
O storms of long ago !

That FORCE unchain'd, volcanic, belching fire,
Which shook the mountains then, and filled the
coombs
With groaning tongues of flame,
Where is it ? Still, they say, as dread, as dire,
Sprung undiminished from a world of tombs,
It dwells in us the same.

And yet how tranquil sleeps the mountain now !
The water runnels trace their crystal rings
And, thro' the grasses, gleam ;
The tawny oxen pull the trident plough
And turn the soil, while soft the farmer sings
To cheer the straining team.

How tranquil smiles the valley, broad and calm !
Those elemental energies of old
Swoon they indeed beneath ?
Whisper, O wind, made sweet with musk and balm ;
O sunset, rain an influence in thy gold ;
Answer, O cirrus-wreath !

Nay, thou shalt be mine answer, vale of rest
That wast so wild and art so beautiful :
Behold, I understand . . .

As waterfalls, that clear the mountain crest
In torrents, fill the runnels clear and full
That nourish all our land ;

THE VALLEY

So, through a myriad channels, bound in peace
And fruitful, runs the Force of primitive fire,
Divided and divine :

The unnumbered travail of our earth's increase,
The lives of men who toil, foresee, aspire,
The growth of grain and vine ;

The patient oxen ploughing through the clod,
The very dragonflies about the stream,
The larks that sing and soar,
Employ the force of that tremendous God
Who lurks behind our thought, beyond our
dream,
And whom the worlds adore.

Darwinism



WHEN first the unflowering Fern-forest
 Shadowed the dim lagoons of old,
A vague, unconscious, long unrest
 Swayed the great fronds of green and gold.

Until the flexible stem grew rude,
 The fronds began to branch and bower,
And lo ! upon the unblossoming wood
 There breaks a dawn of apple-flower.

Then on the fruitful forest-boughs
 For ages long the unquiet ape
Swung happy in his airy house
 And plucked the apple, and sucked the grape.

Until at length in him there stirred
 The old, unchanged, remote distress,
That pierced his world of wind and bird
 With some divine unhappiness.

Not love, nor the wild fruits he sought,
 Nor the fierce battles of his clan
Could still the unborn and aching thought,
 Until the brute became the man.

Long since ; and now the same unrest
 Goads to the same invisible goal,
Till some new gift, undream'd, unguess'd,
 End the new travail of the soul.

The Stars

(TO J. D.)

SESTINA



STARS in the sky, fold upon fold or stars !
And still beyond the stars those gulfs of air
Flecked soft and pale with milkier stars beyond,
Millions of miles above our dusky world :
Pale stars, whose light down the unplumbed abyss
Falls, ere it reach us, through a thousand years.

There was a God in the unwritten years
Who lit the flaming order of the stars :
Let there be Light ! He said, and lo ! the abyss
Grew live and tremulous with rustling air,
Grew bright with stars and moons, and each a world
Shining, a light to other worlds beyond.

O were you even as we, bright orbs beyond
Who shine and shed your glory all these years,
Not light, but smoke would fall from every world ;
Smoke, black with human evil, black, O stars
With His neglect who lit the sparkling air ;
But left within—unformed and void—the Abyss.

THE STARS

O stars that dance indifferent in the Abyss,
Our Earth may seem as bright to you beyond ;
Yourselves, to them that breathe your delicate air,
As desolate ; Life in the Lunar years
As long ; and the straight rivers of the stars
And primal snows divide as drear a world.

And men, perchance, as we, in every world
Fill with their dreams the bright and vast abyss :
A Christ has died in vain on all the stars,
And each, unhappy, seeks a star beyond
Where God rewards the dead through endless
 years . . .
And so we circle, dumb, in the silent air.

What shall we find more holy in all the air ?
Lo, when the first huge, incandescent world
Burst out of chaos and flamed a million years,
Until, with too much flaming, thro' the abyss
Flake after flake dropped off and flamed beyond :—
That was the God who lit the host of stars !

For Light, the stars ; for breath, the realms of air ;
For Hope, beyond this dark and suffering world,
Nought in the Abyss, nor ought in the endless years.

Etruscan Tombs



I.

To think the face we love shall ever die,
And be the indifferent earth, and know us not !
To think that one of us shall live to cry
On one long buried in a distant spot !

O wise Etruscans, faded in the night
Yourself, with scarce a rose-leaf on your trace ;
You kept the ashes of the dead in sight,
And shaped the vase to seem the vanished face.

But, O my love, my life is such an urn
That tender memories mould with constant touch,
Until the dust and earth of it they turn
To your dear image that I love so much :

A sacred urn, filled with the sacred past,
That shall recall you while the clay shall last.

II.

These cinerary urns with human head
And human arms that dangle at their sides,
The earliest potters made them for their dead,
To keep the mother's ashes or the bride's.

ETRUSCAN TOMBS

O rude attempt of some long-spent despair—
With symbol and with emblem discontent—
To keep the dead alive and as they were,
The actual features and the glance that went !

The anguish of your art was not in vain,
For lo, upon these alien shelves removed
The sad immortal images remain,
And show that once they lived and once you loved

But oh, when I am dead may none for me
Invoke so drear an immortality !

III.

Beneath the branches of the olive yard
Are roots where cyclamen and violet grow ;
Beneath the roots the earth is deep and hard,
And there a king was buried long ago.

The peasants digging deeply in the mould
Cast up the autumn soil about the place,
And saw a gleam of unexpected gold,
And underneath the earth a living face.

With sleeping lids and rosy lips he lay,
Among the wreaths and gems that mark the king,
One moment ; then a little dust and clay
Fell shrivelled over wreath and urn and ring.

A carven slab recalls his name and deeds,
Writ in a language no man living reads.

IV.

Here lies the tablet graven in the past,
Clear-charactered and firm and fresh of line.
See, not a word is gone ; and yet how fast
The secret no man living may divine !

ETRUSCAN TOMBS

What did he choose for witness in the grave ?
A record of his glory on the earth ?
The wail of friends ? The pæans of the brave ?
The sacred promise of the second birth ?

The tombs of ancient Greeks in Sicily
Are sown with slender discs of graven gold
Filled with the praise of death : thrice happy he
Who sleeps the milk-soft sleep of dreams untold.

They sleep their patient sleep in altered lands,
The golden promise in their fleshless hands.

Fire-flies



I.

To-NIGHT I watch the fire-flies rise
And shine along the air ;
They float beneath the starry skies,
As mystical and fair,
Above the hedge where dimly glows
The deep gold of the Persian rose.

I watch the fire-flies drift and float :
Each is a dreamy flame,
Star-coloured each, a starry mote,
Like stars not all the same ;
But whiter some, or faintly green,
Or wannest blue was ever seen.

They cross and cross and disappear,
And then again they glow ;
Still drifting faintly there and here,
Still crossing to and fro,
As though in all their wandering
They wove a wide and shining thing.

FIRE-FLIES

II.

O fire-flies, would I knew the weft
You have the weaving of !
For, as I watch you move, bereft
Of thought or will or love,
I fear, O listless flames, you weave
The fates of men who strive and grieve.

The web of life, the weft of dreams,
You weave it ceaselessly ;
A strange and filmy thing it seems,
And made in mystery
Of wind and darkness threaded through
With light these heavens never knew.

O pale, mysterious, wandering fire,
Born of the earth, alive
With the same breath that I respire,
Who know and think and strive ;
You circle round me, stranger far
Than any charm of any star !

III.

Ah me, as faint as you, as slight,
As hopelessly remote
As you, who still across the night
Innumerable float,
Intangible as you, I see
The motives of our destiny.

For ah, no angel of the stars,
No guardian of the soul,
Stoops down beyond the heavenly bars
Our courses to control,
But filled and nourished with our breath
Are the dim hands that weave our death.

FIRE-FLIES

They weave with many threads our souls,
A subtle-tinted thing,
So interwoven that none controls
His own imagining ;
For every strand with other strands
They twine and bind with viewless hands.

They weave the future of the past ;
Their mystic web is wrought
With dreams from which we woke at last,
And many a secret thought ;
For still they weave, howe'er we strive,
The web new-woven for none alive.

IV.

And still the fire-flies come and go—
Each is a dreamy flame—
Still palely drifting to and fro
The very way they came—
As though, across the dark they wove
Fate and the shining web thereof.

Yet, even were I sure of it,
I would not lift a hand
To break the threads that shine and flit—
For, ah, I understand :
Ruin, indeed, I well might leave ;
But a new web could never weave.

The Idea



BENEATH this world of stars and flowers
That rolls in visible deity,
I dream another world is ours
And is the soul of all we see.

It hath no form, it hath no spirit ;
It is perchance the Eternal Mind ;
Beyond the sense that we inherit
I feel it dim and undefined.

How far below the depth of being,
How wide beyond the starry bound
It rolls unconscious and unseeing,
And is as Number or as Sound.

And through the vast fantastic visions
Of all this actual universe,
It moves unswerved by our decisions,
And is the play that we rehearse.

The Wall



THE sun falls through the olive-trees
And shines upon the wall below,
And lights the wall which cannot know
The Sunlight that it never sees.

I lie and dream ; the Eternal Mind
Rains down on me and fills me full
With secrets high and wonderful ;
And still my soul is deaf and blind.

Justice

(TO M. B.)



“ Lord, what is Justice ? Say,
Shall Man be just ?
Shall mortals strike a ray
Out of the dust ? ”

“ One sage was just : He spake :
‘ Friend, thine is thine !
Keep all thou hast, and take.
Nothing is mine ! ’ ”

God in a Heart



ONCE, where the unentered Temple stood, at noon
No sun-ray pierced the dim unwindowed aisle ;
And all the flooding whiteness of the moon
Could only bathe the outer peristyle.

And as we passed we praised the Temple front ;
But one went in ; with careless feet he trod
The long-forgotten pavement moss'd and blunt
And found the altar of the unprayed-to God.

He reached and lit the tapers of the shrine
And let their radiance flood the vault obscure ;
But ah ! upon what evil things to shine,
Blind, crawling, chill, discoloured, and impure.

Burn on, O Light, burn clearer in the gloom,
And show the foulness of the illumin'd room.

Under the Trees



I LAY full length near lonely trees
Heart-full of sighing silences ;
So far as eyes could see all round
There was no life, no stir, no sound.

I thought no more down in the grass
Of all that must be or that was ;
My weary brain forgot to ache,
My heart was still and did not break.

So close I lay to earth's large breast
I could have dreamed myself at rest ;
Only that then the grass must be
Above instead of under me.

Wherefore, I thought, should I regain
My anxious life that is so vain ?
Here will I lie, forgetting strife,
Till death shall end this death-in-life.

Ah, no : because, O coward will,
Thy destined work thou must fulfil,
Because no soul, be it great or small,
Can rise alone or lonely fall.

UNDER THE TREES

Therefore the old war must not cease,
The hard old inner war of peace,
With heart and body and mind and soul
Each striving for a different goal.

Therefore I will arise and bear
The burden all men everywhere
Have borne and must bear, and bear yet,
Till the end come when we forget.

The Ideal



THE night is dark and warm and very still,
Only the moon goes pallid and alone ;
The moon and I the whole wide heavens fill,
And all the earth lies little, lost, unknown.

I walk along the byways of my Soul,
Beyond the streets where all the world may go,
Until at last I reach the hidden goal
Built up in strength where only I may know.

For in my Soul a temple have I made,
Set on a height, divine and steep and far,
Nor often may I hope those floors to tread,
Or reach the gates that glimmer like a star.

O secret, inner shining of my dream,
How clear thou risest on my soul to-night !
Forth will I fare and seek the heavenly beam,
And stand within the precincts of the light.

And I will press beyond the curtain'd door,
And up the empty aisle where no one sings ;
There will I fall before thee and adore,
And feel the shadowy winnowing of thy wings.

THE IDEAL

So will I reach thee, Spirit ; for I have known
Thy voice, and looked upon thy blinding eyes ;
And well thou knowest the world to me is grown
One dimness whence thy dreamy beacons rise.

Nor ask I any hope nor any end,
That thus for thee I dream all day, all night ;
But, like the moon along the skies, I wend,
Knowing no world below my borrowed light.

A Classic Landscape



THIS wood might be some Grecian heritage
Of the antique world, this hoary ilex wood ;
So broad the shade, so deep the solitude,
So grey the air where Oread fancies brood.

Beyond, the fields are tall with purple sage ;
The sky bends downward like a purple sheet—
A purple wind-filled sail—i' the noonday heat ;
And past the river shine the fields of wheat.

O tender wheat, O starry saxifrage,
O deep-red tulips, how the fields are fair !
Far off the mountains pierce the quivering air,
Ash-coloured, mystical, remote, and bare.

How far they look, the Mountains of Mirage
Or northern Hills of Heaven, how far away !
In front the long paulonia-blossoms sway
From leafless boughs across that dreamy grey.

O world, how worthy of a golden age !
How might Theocritus have sung and found
The Oreads here, the Naiads gathering round,
Their pallid locks still dripping to the ground !

For me, O world, thou art how mere a stage,
Whereon the human soul must act alone,
In a dead language, with the plot unknown,
Nor learn what happens when the play is done.

Versailles

"Le monde est l'œuvre d'un grand Architecte qui est mort avant de l'avoir achevé."—B. CONSTANT.



THE king is dead who planned these terraces ;
The turf has grown to meadow-grass again ;
The lake is rank beneath the untended trees,
And down the mouldering statues drips the rain.

The king is dead. Ay, he, with all his kind,
Is absolutely vanished, lost, and gone,
And not a trace of him remains behind ;
But the forsaken palace lingers on.

How desolate ! The weary waters drowned
In mist, the empty alleys chill and froze,
The vast and melancholy pleasure-ground
Where the forgotten monarch comes no more.

How like an older Folly, planned no less
For beauty, where a greater monarch trod,
And now, grown old, in its extreme distress
Abandoned by the long-departed God !

The One Certainty



LIGHTLY I hold my life, with little dread
And little hope for what may spring therefrom,
But live like one that builds a summer's home
Of branches on a dried-up river-bed,
And takes no thought of frescoed blue and red
To paint the walls, and plans no golden dome,
Knowing the flood, when autumn rains are come,
Shall roll its ruining waters overhead.

And wherefore should I plant my ground and sow ?
—Since, though I reckon not of the day or hour,
The conqueror comes at last, the alien foe
Shall come to my defenceless place in power,
With force, with arms, with strenuous overthrow,
Taking the goods I gathered for his dower.

Personality

(A SESTINA)



As one who goes between high garden walls,
Along a road that never has an end,
With still the empty way behind, in front,
Which he must pace for evermore alone—
So, even so, is Life to every soul,
Walled in with barriers which no Love can break.

And yet, ah me ! how often would we break
Through fence and fold, and overleap the walls,
To link ourselves to some belovèd soul ;
Hearing her answering voice until the end,
Going her chosen way, no more alone,
But happy comrades, seeing Heaven in front.

But, ah, the barrier's high ! and still my front
I dash against the stones in vain, nor break
A passage through, but still remain alone.
Sometimes I hear across high garden walls
A voice the wind brings over, or an end
Of song that sinks like dew into my soul.

PERSONALITY

Since others sing, let me forget, my Soul,
How dreary-long the road goes on in front,
And tow'rds how flat, inevitable an end.
Come, let me look for daisies, let me break
The gillyflowers that shelter in the walls—
But, ah ! it is so sad to be alone !

For ever, irremediably alone,
Not only I or thou, but every soul,
Each cased and fastened with invisible walls.
Shall we go mad with it ? or bear a front
Of desperate courage doomed to fail and break ?
Or trudge in sullen patience till the end ?

Ah, hope of every heart, there *is* an end !
An end when each shall be no more alone,
But strong enough and bold enough to break
This prisoning self and find that larger Soul
(Neither of thee nor me) enthroned in front
Of Time, beyond the world's remotest walls !

I trust the end ; I sing within my walls,
Sing all alone, to bid some listening soul
Wait till the day break, watch for me in front !

Tuberoses



I.

THE Tuberoses you left me yesterday
Leans yellowing in the grass we set it in ;
It could not live when you were gone away,
Poor spike of withering sweetness changed and thin.

And all the fragrance of the dying flower
Is grown too faint and poisoned at the source,
Like passion that survives a guilty hour,
To find its sweetness heavy with remorse.

What shall we do, my dear, with dying roses ?
Shut them in weighty tomes where none will look
—To wonder when the unfrequent page uncloses
Who shut the wither'd blossoms in the book ?—

What shall we do, my dear, with things that perish,
Memory, roses, love we feel and cherish ?

II.

Alive and white, we praised the Tuberoses,
So sweet it fill'd the garden with its breath,
A spike of waxy bloom that grows and grows
Until at length it blooms itself to death.

TUBEROSES

Everything dies that lives—everything dies ;
How shall we keep the flower we lov'd so long ?
O press to death the transient thing we prize,
Crush it, and shut the elixir in a song.

A song is neither live nor sweet nor white ;
It hath no heavenly blossom tall and pure,
No fragrance can it breathe for our delight,
It grows not, neither lives ; it may endure.

Sweet Tuberose, adieu ! you fade too fast !
Only a dream, only a thought, can last.

III.

Who'd stay to muse if Death could never wither ?
Who dream a dream if Passion did not pass ?
But, once deceived, poor mortals, hasten hither
To watch the world in Fancy's magic glass.

Truly your city, O men, hath no abiding !
Built on the sand it crumbles, as it must ;
And as you build, above your praise and chiding,
The columns fall to crush you to the dust.

But fashion'd in the mirage of a dream,
Having nor life nor sense, a bubble of nought,
The enchanted City of the Things that Seem
Keeps till the end of time the eternal Thought.

Forswear to-day, forswearing joy and sorrow,
Forswear to-day, O man, and take to-morrow.

The Barrier



LAST night I dreamed I stood once more
Beneath our garden wall.
I saw the willows bending grey,
The poplar springing tall.

O paths where oft I plucked the rose,
O steeple in the sky,
O Common swelling darkly green,
How glad at heart was I !

My hand I raised to lift the latch,
But lo, the gate was gone !
And all around, ay, all around
There ran a wall of stone . . .

O years when oft we plucked the rose,
When oft we laughed and cried !
Thou hast no gate, O Youth, our Youth,
When once we stand outside !

The Road Leading Nowhere



THE road leading nowhere
Is bright in the morn ;
We troop it and foot it
By thicket and thorn.

With fewer companions
We pace it at even ;
The road leading nowhere
Is pleasant and even.

But oh ! there's an hour
That is fatal and still ;
'Tis the halt after noon
At the top of the hill.

'Tis the look of the road
As it slips out of sight ;
'Tis the flight of the day
And the dread of the night.

Spring and Autumn



God in His heart made Autumn for the young ;
That they might learn to accept the approach of
age

In golden woods and starry saxifrage
And valleys all with azure mists o'erhung.

For over Death a radiant veil He flung,
That thus the inevitable heritage
Might come revealed in beauty, and assuage
The dread with which the heart of youth is wrung.

And for the consolation of the old
He made the delicate, swift, tumultuous Spring ;
That every year they might again behold

The image of their youth in everything
And bless the fruit-trees flowering in the cold
Whose harvest is not for their gathering.

Fair Ghosts



WHEN the extreme of autumn whirls the oak-leaf from
the forest,
Till from the withered ling,
The hardiest birds take wing ;—
Courage, O Heart ! there surges through this winter
thou abhorrest,
The Vision of the spring !

When the oncoming years dispel the magic of our
morning
Till all the Past is shed
With petals falling red :
Perish'd illusions, hope defeated, passion turned to
scorning,
Eternal friendship dead ;

Ah, in how many an hour of twilight,—Soft ! they
wake and flutter,
And hover round us yet,
The ghosts of our regret :
Evermore altered faces, names we never hear or utter
And nevermore forget !

Rock, O tormented forest, all thy branches torn and
hoary !
In vain the tempest stings ;
The skies I watch are Spring's,
Lovelier still and haloed with the soft poetic glory
Of all remembered things !

Souvenir



EVEN as a garden, full of branch and blooth,
Seen in a looking-glass appears more fair
With boughs suspended in a magic air,
More spacious and more radiant than the truth,

So I remember thee, my happy youth,
And smile to look upon the days that were,
As they had never told of doubt or care,
As I had never wept for grief or ruth.

So, were our spirits destined to endure,
So, were the after-life a promise sure,
And not the mocking mirage of our death,

Through all eternity might heaven appear
The still, the vast, the radiant souvenir
Of one unchanging moment known on earth.

The Vision



SOMETIMES when I sit musing all alone
The sick diversity of human things,
Into my soul, I know not how, there springs
The vision of a world unlike our own.

O stable Zion, perfect, endless, one,
Why hauntest thou a soul that hath no wings?
I look on thee as men on mirage springs,
Knowing the desert bears but sand and stone.

Yet as a passing mirror in the street
Flashes a glimpse of gardens out of range
Through some poor sick-room open to the heat,
So, in a world of doubt and death and change,
The vision of eternity is sweet,
The vision of eternity is strange.

The Present Age



WE stand upon a bridge between two stars,
And one is half engulféd in the Abyss,
While unarisen still the other is,
Hidden behind the Orient's cloudy bars.

WE tread indeed a perilous path by night,
Yet we who walk in darkness unaghast
Prepare the future and redeem the past,
And know the Morning-star shall bring the light.

Liberty



LIBERTY, fiery Goddess, dangerous Saint !
God knows I worship thee no less than they
Who fain would set thee in the common way
To battle at their sides without restraint,

Redoubtable Amazon ! Who, never faint,
Climbest the barricades at break of day,
With tangled locks and blood-besmirched array,
Thy torch low-smoking through the carnage taint !

But I would set thee in a golden shrine
Above the enraptured eyes of dreaming men,
Where thou shouldst reign immutable, divine,
A hope to all generations and a sign ;
Slow-guiding to the stars, through quag and fen,
The scions of thine aye-unvanquished line !

Veritatem Dilexi

(*In Memoriam—Ernest Renan*)



“TRUTH is an Idol,” spake the Christian sage.
“Thou shalt not worship Truth divorced from
Love.

Truth is but God’s reflection : Look above !”
So Pascal wrote, and still we muse the page.

“Truth is divine,” said Plato, “but on high
She dwells, and few may be her ministers,
For Truth is sad and lonely and diverse :
Heal thou the weakling with a generous lie !”

But thou in Truth delightedst ! Thou of soul
As subtle-shimmering as the rainbow mist,
And still in all her service didst persist.
For no one truth thou lovedst, but the Whole.

Taking Possession



WHEN, in the wastes of old, the Arabian Sheikh
Beheld a sudden peace amid the sands,
With springing waters and green pasture lands,
Fringed with the waving palm and cactus-spike,

Think ye he stayed to fashion fence or dyke ?
Nay ! for he called into his hollowed hands
Till all his hounds came trooping swift in bands :
Sheep-dog and wolf-hound, terrier, cur, and tyke,

They bayed with deep, full voices on the calm.
Then he : " So far as the last echoes die
The land is mine, pasture and spring and palm ! "

So men who watch afar the Hope Divine
Rally a pack of sectaries and cry :
" Behold the Land of Promise : ours, not thine ! "

Vishtaspa



I.

For thirty years Vishtaspa reigned alone,
No King above him in the empty skies,
No Lord of all earth's fallen sovereignties
To mock the mighty tedium of his throne.

To him the secrets of the stars were known
Who was above all sages great and wise ;
Yet as the years dragged on without surprise
He wearied of this world that was his own.

Earth is too narrow for the dreaming Soul.
Ay, tho' she hold it all from pole to pole
Her least desire is wider than the whole.

Therefore who knows the limit of his power
Disdains the trivial baubles of an hour,
And plunges where the seas of silence roll.

II.

"Life is a dream," Vishtaspa said, "wherein
The dreamer lives alone ; the rest is vain . . .
My dream shall end, for I would sleep again ;
Wherefore farewell, glitter and glare and din !"

He went his palace-terraces to win :

“Farewell ! I cast me to the quiet plain.”

He would have leapt ; but lo ! a voice spake
plain :

“Mortal ! thy Master saith : thou shalt not sin.”

And at his side, unguess'd, Zoroaster trod . . .

O sudden peace of heart, O deep delight

Of souls outgrown religion's earlier rite,

Yet spent and thirsting for the springs of God,

When lo ! at last the Prophet deigns appear . . .

Vishtaspa reign'd in rapture many a year.

Zeno



THE Greeks narrate that Zeno Cypriote—
Ger-Baäl ben Manassch, Lord of Truth—
Twixt Citium and Athens, in his youth
Trading in Tyrian purple, plied his boat.

Still in the Porch and Grove the Athenians quote
The lean Phœnician merchant, swart, uncouth,
Who stopped to read beside the copyist's booth,
And left his cargo twenty years afloat !

He was the first who said to Man : "Renounce.
Follow thy soul : thou hast no other claim ;
And yield to Fate as lambs to the eagle's pounce.

"Do right. Fear nothing, deeming all the same."
Yet not for that we heap his tomb with crowns.
But, Duty, he was first to breathe thy name !

Sacrifice



O PATIENT-EYED and tender saint,
Too far from thee I stand,
With vain desires perplexed and faint ;
Reach out thy helping hand.
No fire is on the holy hill,
No voice on Sinai now ;
But, in our gloom and darkness still
Abiding, help me thou.

They move on whom thy light is shed
Through lives of larger scope ;
For them beneath the false and dead
There stirs a quickening hope.
So on some gusty morn we mark
The reddening tops of trees,
And hear in carols of the lark
Thespesian promises.

A Jonquil

IN THE PISAN CAMPO SANTO



Out of the place of death,
Out of the cypress shadow,
Out of sepulchral earth,
Dust the Calvary gave ;
Sprang, as fragrant of breath
As any flower of the meadow,
This, with death in its birth,
Sent like speech from the grave.

So, in a world of doubt,
Love—like a flower—
Blossoms suddenly white,
Suddenly sweet and pure ;
Shedding a breath about
Of new mysterious power ;
Lifting a hope in the night,
Not to be told, but sure.

Unum est Necessarium



I THOUGHT that I was ravished to a height
 Whence earth was lost with all I once had known ;
I saw the stars flash dwindling thro' the night,
 Like sparklets from a blackening yule-log thrown ;
And nothing else remained of all that is
 Save the essential life of souls alone.

Behold ! Like flowers of light against the abyss
 I watched them move and shine—how soft and
 clear !
With trailing rays of light, with streams of bliss,
 With haloes of a heavenly atmosphere :
Like flowers at dusk, when first the froth and bloom
 Of blond immense chrysanthemums appear
To shake a loose, fresh aureole o'er the gloom
 (If human sense and common vision might
 Divine the splendours of that Upper Room
Where motion, joy, and life are one with light)—
 Like flowers made meteors, then, or meteors flowers,
 The radiant spirits circled holy-bright.

And lo ! I heard a voice from Heaven, not ours,
 “ This is the Race,” it cried, “ this is the Race
 Of Radiating Souls, the large in heart,
And where they circle is a holy place !

UNUM EST NECESSARIUM

Yet not of them, O Gazer, know thou art :
Look further ! ”

Then with anxious sight astrain
I pierced the depth of space from part to part,
And lo ! adrift as leaves that eddy in vain,
I watched the vacant, vagrant, aimless dance
Of Souls concentred in their bliss or pain :
Unneighbour'd souls, the drift of time and chance.

* * * * *

O bright, unthrifty stars that glow and spend
Your radiance unregarding, when my glance
Fell from the fulgence where your orbits trend,
So far, I felt as men who smile in dreams
And wake, at rainy dawn, without a friend !
So bare they looked, bereft of all their beams ;
Poor spheres that trail their cloudy mantles dim
Where throb and fret a few faint feverish gleams.
“ Look,” said the Voice, “ for thou art such an one
Many are ye ; the uncentred Souls are few ! ”

▲

I gazed ; and as we used to fix the sun
In London thro’ the fogs our valleys knew,
Beneath their shrouds I saw these too were bright.
“ Be thankful ! ” then acclaimed the Voice anew,
Adore, and learn that all men love the Light ! ”
And, as the motion of their muffled fires
Grew more distinct to mine undazzled sight,
I half-forgot those glad and gracious quires,
In pity of their dearth who dream and yearn,
Pent up and shrouded in their lone desires.

Aye, even as plants that grow in chambers turn
Their twisted branches towards the window space,
And languish for the daylight they discern,
So longed these spirits for the Light of Grace !
And aye their passionate yearning would attract
Some beam within their cloudy dwelling-place,

UNUM EST NECESSARIUM

Some dewy star-beam to their parch'd contact ;
But, even as dew or raindrop, when they fall
Upon the insatiate earth, are changed in the act,
Cease to be water, and no more at all
Are either dew or rain—but only mire !—
So the benignant rays of Heaven would pall
And faint into a maze of misty fire
At touch of these concentrated spirits aye
Locked in their long ungenerous desire.
Thus, shrouded each alone, nor far nor nigh
Their shine was shed, nor shared by any mate ;
Secret and still each burned, a separate I,
Lost in no general glory, penetrate
With no sweet mutual marvels of the sky,
And bitter isolation was their state.

“Unjust Eternity !” I mourned aghast.
“O dread, unchanging, predetermined Fate,
Shall evermore the Future ape the Past ?”

“Thou seest nor Past nor Future,” cried the Voice.
“Such is the life thou leadest, such thou wast,
Art, shalt be ; such thy bent is and thy choice,
O centre-seeking Soul that cannot love,
Nor radiate, nor relinquish, nor rejoice !
Know, they are wise who squander : Look above !”

And lo ! a beam of their transcendent bliss
Who, ever giving, ever losing, move
In self-abandoned bounty through the abyss,
Pierced to my soul with so divine a dart,
I swooned with pain, I wakened to a kiss :
“Blessèd,” I sang, “are ye the large in heart
Irradiate with the light in alien eyes ;
For ye have chosen indeed the brighter part,
And where ye circle is our Paradise.”

Calais Beacon

(TO E. S.)



For long before we came upon the coast and the line
of the surge,

Pale on the uttermost verge,
We saw the great white rays that lay along the air on
high
Between us and the sky.

So soft they lay, so pure and still : "Those are the
ways," you said,

"Only the angels tread ;"
And long we watched them tremble past the hurrying
rush of the train
Over the starlit plain.

Until at last we saw the strange, pallid electrical star
Burning wanly afar :
The lighthouse beacon sending out its rays on either
hand,
Over the sea and the land.

CALAIS BEACON

Those pale and filmy rays that reach to mariners, lost in
the night,

A hope of dawn and a light—

How soft and vague they lie along the darkness
shrouding o'er,

The dim sea and the shore.

And many fall in vain across the untenanted marshes to
die,

And few where sailors cry ;

Yet, though the moon go out in clouds, and all of the
stars grow wan,

Their paleness shineth on.

O souls, that save a world by night, ye too are no rays
of the noon,

No glory and flood of the moon ;

But pale and tender-shining things as yon faint beacon
atar,

Whiter than any star.

No planet names that all may tell, no meteor radiance
and glow,

For a wondering world to know.

You shine as pale and soft as that, you pierce the
stormy night,

And know not of your light !

The Gospel according to St. Peter



To-MORROW or in twenty centuries
The sudden falling open of a lid
On some grey tomb beside the Pyramid
May bring the First Evangel to our eyes.

That day, who knows with what aghast surprise
Our priests shall touch the very deeds He did,
And learn the truth so many ages hid,
And find, perchance, the Christ did never rise.

What then ? shall all our faith be accounted vain ?
Nothing be left of all our nights of prayer ?
Nothing of all the scruples, all the tears
Of endless generations' endless years ?
Take heart ! Be sure the fruits of these remain.
Hark to the Inner Witness : Christ is there !

A Controversy



LET us no more dispute of Heaven and Hell !
How should we know what none hath ever seen ?
We'll watch instead the same sweet miracle
That every April work in wood and green. . . .

The apples in our orchard are a bower
Of budding bright-green leaf and pearly flower,
No two alike of all the myriad blossom !
Some faintly-flushing as a maiden's bosom,
Some pursed in hardy pink, and some as pale
As whitening stars above the twilit vale.

If sometimes from His balcony on high,
The Lord of all the stars, with musing eye,
Look down upon this orchard of our world,
Methinks he marks as blossom dewy-pearled
Sprung from the branches of the self-same tree,
Our varying faiths—and all the creeds there be !—
Indifferently radiant, chiefly dear
For that ripe harvest of the later year
Which promises a winter-wealth of mead
To fill the goblet up and brim the bowl :—
His wine of generous thought and ample deed
Sprung from the blossom of a perfect soul.

Antiphon to the Holy Spirit



Men and Women sing.

Men.

O THOU that movest all, O Power
That bringest life where'er Thou art,
O Breath of God in star and flower,
Mysterious aim of soul and heart ;
Within the thought that cannot grasp Thee
In its unfathomable hold,
We worship Thee who may not clasp Thee,
O God, unreckoned and untold !

Women.

O Source and Sea of Love, O Spirit
That makest every soul akin,
O Comforter whom we inherit,
We turn and worship Thee within !
To give beyond all dreams of giving,
To lose ourselves as Thou in us,
We long ; for Thou, O Fount of living,
Art lost in Thy creation thus !

ANTIPHON TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Men.

The mass of unborn matter knew Thee,
And lo ! the splendid silent sun
Sprang out to be a witness to Thee
Who art the All, who art the One ;
The airy plants unseen that flourish
Their floating strands of filmy rose,
Too small for sight, are Thine to nourish ;
For Thou art all that breathes and grows.

Women.

Thou art the ripening of the fallows,
The swelling of the buds in rain ;
Thou art the joy of birth that hallows
The rending of the flesh in twain ;
O Life, O Love, how undivided
Thou broodest o'er this world of Thine,
Obscure and strange, yet surely guided
To reach a distant end divine !

Men.

We know Thee in the doubt and terror
That reels before the world we see ;
We knew Thee in the faiths of error ;
We know Thee most who most are free.
This phantom of the world around Thee
Is vast, divine, but not the whole :
We worship Thee, and we have found Thee
In all that satisfies the soul !

Men and Women.

How shall we serve, how shall we own Thee,
O breath of Love and Life and Thought ?
How shall we praise, who are not shown Thee ?
How shall we serve, who are as nought ?
Yet, though Thy worlds maintain unbroken
The silence of their awful round,
A voice within our souls hath spoken,
And we who seek have more than found.

Poems and Idylls

The Widow



SHE hath no children, and no heart
In all our hurrying anxious life ;
She sits beyond our ken apart,
Unmoved, unconscious of our strife ;
Shipwrecked beyond these coasts of ours,
On some sad island full of flowers
Where nothing moves but memory ;
Where no one lives but only he ;
And all we others barely seem
The phantom figures of a dream
One dreams and says, " It cannot be ! "

If sometimes when we talk with her
Those absent eyes light up awhile
And her set lips consent to stir
In the beginning of a smile,
It is not of our world nor us
But some remembrance tremulous,
Some sweet " Ten years ago to-day ! "
Or haply, if a sudden ray
Set all her window in a glow,
She thinks : " 'Twill make the roses blow
I planted at his feet to-day."

THE WIDOW

His tomb is all her garden-plot,
And rain or sunshine find her there.
She plants her blue forget-me-not
With hands but half unclasped from prayer ;
Her loving mercies overbrim
O'er all the tombs that neighbour him ;
On each she sets a dewy-pearled
Sweet pink or fernlet fresh-uncurled ;
She plucks the withering violets ;
And here if anywhere forgets
The emptiness of all the world.

Here, where she used to sob for hours,
Her deep fidelity unchanged
Hath found a calm that is not ours,
A peace exalted and estranged.
Here in the long light summer weather
She brings the books they chose together
And reads the verse he liked the most ;
And here, as softly as a ghost,
Comes gliding through the winter gloom
To say her prayer beside the tomb
Of him she loves and never lost.

Helen in the Wood



I LEFT the yew-tree shadow, thrown
Slantwise across the graves, and grown
So long I knew the day waxed late,
And opened wide the churchyard gate ;
Paused there ; for from the church behind
Voices of women thrilled the wind,
And organ music rose and rang :
I heard the village choir that sang.
But I, that had no heart for song,
Sighed, shut the gate, and went along
The lane (where rows of elms, wind-vexed,
Nodded fantastic heads perplexed
At winter's dimly boded woes),
Until the trees grew thick and close.
The rain was over, but the copse
Shook down at whiles some after-drops,
Tho' sunshine, thro' wet branches seen,
Flickered in living flakes of green,
And, where below ground-ivy grew,
A fallen heaven lay darkly blue.

So soon ! the tempest scarce was done,
And all the wet world sang and shone
More lovely yet : I think the place
Found but in grief an added grace ;
While I—the tears fell and I sighed :
It was a year since Helen died.

HELEN IN THE WOOD

At last I raised mine eyes. Behold,
The branches green, the bracken's gold
Gained a new meaning in my sight,
That found the centre of their light.
For down the dim wood-arches came—
Was it a star? Was it a flame?—
No; there my Helen went, all white.

Just as of old, above the large
Sweet eyes, the hair made golden marge;
Thro' tangled fern, thro' grass still wet,
Her feet went firmly on;—and yet
I knew, altho' no word was said,
She did not live, she was not dead.

Ah, having loved we cannot lose!
The deepest grave can ne'er refuse
The phantom of the Past, the ghost
Of all we loved and owned and lost!
So once, one moment, Helen dear,
I saw thee still beside me here.
I praised the old familiar grace. . . .
She paused, she looked me in the face,
Smiled once her smile that understood,
Passed;—and how lonely was the wood!

I trod the way I went before;
I passed the church's open door.
The hymn went pealing up the sky:
"O love, how deep! how broad! how high!"

Loss



DEAD here in Florence ! Yes, she died.
The prophesying doctors lied
Who swore the South should save her life.
But no, she died, my little wife.

I brought her South ; the whole long way,
She was as curious and as gay
As a young bird that tries its wing,
And halts to look at everything.

O sudden-turning little head,
Dear eyes—dear changing, wistful eyes—
Your love, your eager life, now lies
Under this earth of Florence, dead.

All of her dead except the Past—
The finished Past, that cannot grow—
But that, at least, will always last
Mocking, consoling, Life-in-show.

Will that fade too ? Seven days ago
She was alive and by my side,
And yet I cannot now divide,
The pallid, gasping girl who died
From her I used to love and know.

Only in moments lives the Past !
One like a sunlit peak stands out
Above the blurring mist and doubt
That creep about our dead so fast.

All night the train has rushed through France,
I watch the shaken lamp-light dance
About my darling's sleeping face.

Loss

And now the engine slackens pace
And staggers up the mountain side ;
And now the depths of night divide
And let a lighter darkness through,
A tangible, dim smoke of blue
That lights the world, and is not Light
Before the dawn, beyond the night.

The vapour clings about the grass
And makes its greenness very green,
Through it the tallest pine-tops pass
Into the night, and are not seen.
A little wind begins to stir,
The haze grows colourless and bright,
Thicker and darker springs the fir,
The train swings slowly up the height,
Each mile more slowly swings the train,
Before the mountains, past the plain.

And through the light that is not day
I feel her now as there she lay
Close in my arms, and still asleep ;
Close in my arms, so dear, so dear ;
I hold her close, and warm, and near,
Who sleeps where it is cold and deep.

That is my boasted memory ;
That,—the impression of a mood,
Effects of light on grass and wood,
Such things as I shall often see.

But Her ! God, I may try in vain,
I shall never see her again—
She will never say one new word,
Scarce echo one I often heard.
Even in dreams she is not quite here—
Flitting, escaping still. I fear
Her voice will go, her face be blurred
Wholly, as long year follows year.

Loss

Often enough I think I have got
The turn of her head and neck, but not
The face—never the face that speaks.
My mind goes seeking, and seeks and seeks.

Sometimes, indeed, I feel her at hand,
Sometimes feel sure she will understand,
If only I do not look or think . . .
Out of an empty cup I drink !

* * * *

Down Lung' Arno again to-day
I went alone the self-same way
I walked with her and heard her tell
What she would do when she was well.

All else the same. Upon the hill
White Samminiato watching still
Among its pointing cypresses.
And that long, farthest Apennine
Still lifts a dusky, reddish line
Against the blue. How warm it is !
And every tower and every bridge
Stands crisp and sharp in the brilliant air ;
Only along the mountain ridge
And on the hill-spurs everywhere
The olives are a smoke of blue,
Until upon the topmost height
They pale into a livid white
Against the intense, clear, salient hue
Of that mid-heaven's azure light.

This, for one day, my darling knew.

We meant to rest here, passing through.
How pleased she was with everything !
But most that winter was away
So soon, and birds began to sing ;
For all the streets were full of flowers,
The sky so blue above the towers—
Just such a day as it is to-day,
When in the sun it feels like May.

Loss

So here I pace where the sun is warm,
With no light weight dragging my arm,
Here in the sun we hoped would save—

Oh, sunny portal of the grave,
Florence, how well I know your trick !
Lay all the walls with sunshine thick
As paint ; put colours in the air,
Strange southern trees upon your slopes ;
And make your streets at Christmas fair
With flourish of roses ; fill with hopes
And wonder all who gaze on you,
Loveliest town earth ever knew !
Then, presto ! take them unaware
With a blast from an open grave behind—
The icy blast of the wind—a knife
Thrust in one's back to take one's life.
Oh, 'tis an excellent, cunning snare,
For the flowers grow on and do not mind
(Who sees, if the petals be thickened and pocked ?)
And the olive, and cypresses, and ilex grow on.
It is only the confident heart that is mocked,
It is only the delicate life that is gone !

How I hate it, all this mask !
Those beggars really seem to bask
In this mock sunshine ; even I
Turn giddy in the blinding light.
It is all a pretence—it is all a lie—
Have I not seen my darling die ?

Those mocking, leering, thin-faced apes,
Who twang their sharp guitars all night,
They are but thin unreal shapes,
The figures of a mirage-show.
They do not really live, I know ;
But once I heard them swear and fight,
“By God, the Assassin !” then they cried.
The mask fell off then. Yes, she died.

The Children's Angel



THE streets are dark at Clermont in Auvern.
—O steep and tortuous lava-streets, how plain
With eyes that dream in daylight I discern
Your narrow skies and gabled roofs again !

See, through the splendours of the summer heat
We climb the hill from Notre Dame du Port,
A mountain at the end of every street,
And every mountain crowned with tower or fort.

Until, on the upmost ridges of the town,
We turn into the narrowest street of all,
And watch, at either end, the way slope down
As steep and sudden as a waterfall !

'Twas there, above a booth of huckster's ware,
Our Angel spread her broad and carven wings.
She smiled with painted eyes and burnished hair
Above a motley herd of trivial things ;

A Chancel-angel desecrate ! We turned
To barter for a price the lovely head,
The wide blue listening eyes, the brow that yearned,
The slim round neck and lips of palest red,

THE CHILDREN'S ANGEL

But when we clasped our treasure in our hold—
Less perfect, like all treasure, being attained—
Behold, below the lovely eyes, behold
About the mouth, the radiant face was stained !

“ True ! ” quoth the Vendor, “ yet if words or blows
Were ought avail, or children less a pest,
Those lips and eyes would blossom like the rose ! . .
The children never cared to kiss the rest.

“ But every day, all weathers, wet or fine,
Since first I hung your Angel at the door,
Each blessed morning, on the stroke of nine,
And every week-day evening after four,

“ The children from the school-house troop in bands,
Rush down the street their helter-skelter run,
Snatch at your Angel with their chubby hands,
And laugh and leap to kiss it one by one.

“ And would you think they minded, if I played
My lash about their necks ? Who cares ? Not they !
For impudent, delighted, unafraid,
They laugh their riotous laugh and rush away.”

The Merchant paused. We looked each in the face
The other, bade our fancy one farewell ;
“ Nay, keep your Angel in its olden place,”
We cried, “ good friend ; it is not yours to sell.

“ What, did you think us basest of the earth ?
That we, grown old, and heartsick with the truth,
Should rob the little children of their mirth,
And take the children's Angel from their youth.”

Sir Eldric



SIR ELDRIC rode by field and fen
To reach the haunts of heathen men.

About the dusk he came into
A wood of birchen grey,
And on the other side he knew
The heathen country lay.

“’Tis but a night (he sang) to ride,
And Christ shall reach the other side ! ”

The moon came peering thro’ the trees
And found him undismayed,
For still he sang his litanies
And as he rode he prayed.

He looked as young, as pure and glad
As ever looked Sir Galahad.

About the middle of the night
He came upon the brink,
Of running waters cool and white
And lighted there to drink.

And as he knelt a hidden foe
Crept from behind and smote him so.

SIR ELDRIC

He turned ; he felt his heart's blood run ;
He sought his enemy :
“ And shall I leave my deeds undone,
And die for such as thee ? ”

And since a Knight was either man,
They wrestled till the dawn began.

Then in the dim and rustling place
Amid the thyme and dew,
Sir Eldric dealt the stroke of grace,
And sank a-dying too,

And thought upon that other's plight
Who was not sure of Heaven that night.

He dipped his fingers in his breast ;
He sought in vain to rise ;
He leaned across his foe at rest,
And murmured, “ I baptize ! ”

When lo ! the sun broke overhead :
There, at his side, *Himself* lay dead !

The Gardener of Sinope



WHERE loud the Pontine billows roar
And lash the Paphlagonian shore ;
Where first the yellow stretch of sands
Breaks into green and waving sheen
Of growing corn and meadow lands ;
There, nestling grass and sea between,
The little town Sinope stands.
A mile beyond the western gate,
One garden broke the desolate
Waste reach of wind-swept, briny shore—
A garden always green and fair
With companies of roses there,
And lilies maiden-white and tall.
And in that place there dwelt of yore
Phocas, an aged gardener.
He had his house within the wall,
And rarely left the garden space,
Saving to do some deed of grace ;
Little he spoke, and, if at all,
Mere words of greeting and farewell ;
Yet any looking on his face
Would need no second glance to tell
How great a soul lay secret there,
And in his voice there rang a spell
Of consolation and of prayer ;
And all who knew him loved him well.

THE GARDENER OF SINOPE

The people loved him. But the hearts
Of tyrants have no sense of love,
Their natures keep no pulse thereof.
Yet have they passions in their blood :
Sharp fears, suspicion, and the smarts
Of pride misprised, and subtle darts
Of envy, petty malices,
And mean revenges born of these
That breed and breed, a deadly brood. . . .

So when it chanced the governor
Of all those Paphlagonian lands,
Came once along the windy shore
To bless some Temple in the sands,
And heard how Phocas took his ease
At home on feasts and holidays.
Heeding no gods or goddesses,
As giving neither blame or praise
To priest or vestal—but instead
Worked in his garden, prayed, or read,
Tended the sick, buried the dead,
And, though he never sacrificed
To any god in heaven or hell,
Made all his life acceptable
To one dead man, a criminal, Christ—
The governor, hearing of these things,
Hated this gardener ; for a life
With love and prayer for soaring wings,
And scented through with innocent flowers,
Was sore rebuke to his own hours
With cunning, lust and malice rife.
So, having found where Phocas dwelt,
The lowliest of Christ's followers,
He hired two privy murderers,
Who often in such times as these
Have rid him of his enemies ;
And, having bade them go, he felt
Merry, and supped and slept at ease.

THE GARDENER OF SINOPE

The two hired murderers went their way
That night, towards the quiet place
Where Phocas dwelt. Yet had not they
Gone half a furlong from the gate,
Along the woody, desolate,
Wild country, when the open space
Grew thick with storm and white with hail,
Rain that the wind rent as a veil,
And lightning, till the thunder drowned
Their voices, crying as they found
The flooding sea at their feet. Aghast
They stumbled, harried by the blast,
Torn by the hail, half blind with fire,
Weary with baffling waves that higher
And colder crept at their knees. And still
The storm raged on and did not tire,
The storm raged on and knew no law.

At last, half dead with fear, they saw
Far off, dim shining on the hill,
A light that was no levin-light,
Steadier far and far less bright ;
And, carrying it, an ancient man
Walked slowly towards them. As he came
The spent storm slackened, and the flame
Faded. "'Tis Zeus, our guardian !"
Said one ; the other cried, " All hail,
Poseidon, ruler of seas ! " But he
They spoke to merely smiled, and said
Half sighing, " Much these gods avail !
Come to my house, for verily
Ye have great need of rest and bread."
And, turning up the hill with them,
He led them through a pleasant field
Of yellowing corn, until they came
To a wide garden full of grass
And flowering shrubs, and trees that yield
Sweet fruit for eating, and a plot
Of summer flowers among them was

THE GARDENER OF SINOPE

Where, past the garden, stood a cot
Of wattles, with a fountain nigh ;
And, entering in, the weary men
Sank down in anguish, like to die.

But Phocas spread fresh rushes then
And let them on the rushes lie,
And gave them bread and fruit to eat
With wine for drinking, clear and sweet.
And when at last they sank to sleep,
Buried in slumber sound and deep,
The gardener rose and left the house
And stood beneath his apple-trees,
And watched the planets in the boughs
Like heavenly fruit, and felt the breeze
Breathe on him ; somewhere out of sight
The thyme smelt, where his slow feet trod
Along the grass ; all round the night
Compassed him like the love of God.

Then Phocas slept not, but he dreamed.
All round him was a stir of wings
And raiment and soft feet it seemed ;
A shine and music of heavenly things ;
A light of faces, a shimmer of hair,
And heavenly maidens round him there.
Dorothy, crowned with roses, stooped
To pluck a rose from his red-rose tree ;
White-rose Cecily, where there drooped
A snowy rosebud, tenderly
Laid it inside her music book.
Then Agnes took an olive bough
And bound it crown-wise round her brow,
While Margaret all the rest forsook
For daisies in the grass to look.
Our Lady Mary herself came down
To gather lilies for a crown
And sent her angel-messenger
Where Phocas, all bewildered, was.

THE GARDENER OF SINOPE

Thus spake he to the gardener :
"All the flowers thy garden has
That be chiefly sweet and fair
Gather them to make a wreath,
Many a fragrant wreath and rare,
To bring with thee to Paradise—"
Then all they vanished from his eyes
And Phocas felt the dark like Death—

Thereupon he took his spade
And underneath the pleasant shade
Of apple boughs a grave he made.
When his gravemaking was done
There was some time till rise of sun,
Till then he walked amid his flowers,
The friends of many summer hours,
And bade farewell to every one.
And from all his flowers he chose
Bluest violet, reddest rose,
Peonies and Aaron-rod,
Pinks and wallflowers, columbines,
Ferns and tendrils of wild vines,
And lilies for the mother of God.
And having chosen and woven them
To many a wreath and anadem,
He laid them in the grave, and went
Back to his house, at peace, content.
But when he entered at the door
A pang ran through his heart, because
He knew so well the roof, the floor,
The home-made walls, the little flaws
In workmanship, the friendly air
Of all the things that made him there
A home more dear than palaces ;
For the last time he saw all these.

He checked the sigh ; spread on the board
Of meat and wine his slender hoard,
And roused his sleeping guests, who lay
Still on the mat at break of day.

THE GARDENER OF SINOPE

They, being aroused, fell to and eat
Amain and drank right thirstily
The rustic feast before them set
And Phocas went and brought them fruit,
Honey, and cakes of wheat to boot.
And, when at last their feasting ends,
He saith : " I fain would ask ye, friends,
What errand took ye on the road
That only leads to my abode ? "
The younger guest laughed out—" Not you—
Not to seek such as you we came,
But some foul Christian—what's his name ?—
May Charon take him and his crew ! "

" Nay, friend (the elder said), we bore
A message from the governor
To one called Phocas. Know ye him ? "

Then before Phocas day grew dim
And Death came surging in his ears
Because the worst of all his fears
Grew plain before him. Quietly
He rose and answered : " I am he ! "

" By Zeus, the god of strangers, then,"
Shouted the younger of the men,
" Get hence, and quickly, I pray you, fly ! "
The elder said—" What, overbold,
Thou knowest well that thou and I
Must answer for him ? Let him die !
Better he than us, for he is old . . . "
Whereat the younger said, " Outside
Last night in the cold we had surely died,
But that this gardener succoured us.
I will not slay him."

" Yet for us "
(The elder spake) " the dreadful night
And cruel storm and lightning bright
Were safer than our ruler's hate."

THE GARDENER OF SINOPE

Here Phocas answered, "Do not wait,
But make an end, and quickly. I
Have God's sure warrant I shall die.
Slay me and fear not. Know that death
Gives all life only promiseth ;
No Christian fears to die. But this
I ask you : lay me in the grave
Outside, where the apple-orchard is.
Now make an end ; I pardon you.
O Christ, my Saviour, I pray Thee, save
These men that know not what they do."
Then Phocas led them to the shade
Of apple boughs, and on the sward
Awhile he knelt. The younger prayed
And wept ; the elder drew his sword,
Struck at the reverent, bowed head
Once, twice, and Phocas lay there dead.

One brought back the bloody sword,
Two claimed a murderer's reward.

Jützi Schultheiss

TÖSS, 1300

[Jützi Schultheiss, a medieval Mystic, loses her gifts of trance and vision, because in a moment of anger she refuses to pray for some turbulent knights.]



THE gift of God was mine ; I lost
For aye the gift of Pentecost.

I never knew why God bestowed
On me the vision and the load ;
But what He wills I have no will
To question, blindly following still
The hand that even from my birth
Hath shown me Heaven, forbidding Earth.
I was a child when first I drew
In sight of God ; a subtle, new,
Faint happiness had drawn about
My soul, and shut the whole earth out.
Yet I was sick. I lay in bed
So weak I could not lift my head—
So weak, and yet so quite at rest,
Pillowed upon my Saviour's breast
I smiled ; and suddenly I felt
Great wings encompass me, and dwelt

JÜTZI SCHULTHEISS

Silent awhile in awe and fear,
While swiftly nearer and more near
Descended God. A stream of white
Shining, intolerable light
Blinded mine eyes and all grew dim
While, stilled in trance, I dwelt with Him
A little time in perfect peace ;
Then, fold by fold, the dark withdrew,
I felt the heavenly blessing cease,
And angels swiftly bear me through
The dizzy air in lightning flight
Till here I woke, and it was night.

My mother wept beside my bed,
My brothers prayed ; for I was dead.
Then, when my soul was given back,
I cried, as wretches on the rack
Cry in the last quick wrench of pain,
And breathed, and looked, and lived again.
Ah me, what tears of joy there fell !
How they all cried, "A miracle !"
And kissed me given back to earth,
The dearer for that second birth
To her who bore me first. Ah me,
How glad we were ! Then Anthony,
My brother, spoke : "What God has given,"
He said, "let us restore to Heaven."
And, as he spoke, beneath the rod
I bowed, and gave myself to God.

Not suddenly the gift returned.
Alas ! methinks too much I yearned
For the old earthly joys, the home
That I had left for evermore ;
The garden with its herbs, and store
Of hives filled full of honeycomb ;
The lambs and calves that chiefly were,
Of all we had, my special care ;
My brothers, too, all left behind,

JÜTZI SCHULTHEISS

All, for some other girl to find ;
And she who loves me everywhere,
My mother, whom I often kissed
In absence with vain lips that missed
My mother more than God above.
Much bound was I with earthly love.
So slight my strength, I never could
Have freed myself from servitude.
But He who loves us saw my pain,
And with one blow struck free my chain.

Weeping I knelt within the gloom
One evening in my convent room,
Trying with all my heart to pray,
And sobbing that my thoughts would stray ;
When suddenly again I felt
The unearthly light and rest ; I dwelt
Rapt in mid-heaven the whole night through,
And through my cell the angels flew,
The angels sang, the angels shone.
The Saints in glory, one by one,
Floated to God ; and under Him
Circled the shining Seraphim.

Now from that day my heart was free
And I was God's ; then gradually
The convent learned the solemn truth,
And they were glad because my youth
Was pleasing in the sight of Him
Who filled my spirit to the brim.
They wrote my visions down and made
A treasure of the words I said.
And far and wide the news was spread
That I by God was visited.
Then many sought our convent's door,
And lands and dower began to pour
With blessings on our house ; for thus
Men praised the Lord who favoured us.

JÜTZI SCHULTHEISS

For seven long years the gift was mine,
I often saw the angels shine
Suddenly down the cloister's dark
Deserted length at night ; and oft
At the high mass I seemed to mark
A stranger music, high and soft,
That swam about the heavenly Cup,
And caught our ruder voices up ;
And often, nay, indeed at will,
I would lie back and let the still
Cold trance creep over me—and see
Mary and all the Saints flash by,
Till only God was left and I.

The gift of God was mine ; I lost
For aye the gift of Pentecost.

Once, so possessed with God, I stood
In prayer within the apple-wood,
When some one softly called my name,
And shattered all my happy mood.
Towards me an ancient Sister came,
“Quick, Jützi, to the hall !” she cried ;
And swiftly after her I hied,
And swiftly reached the convent hall,
Now full of struggle and loud with brawl

For twenty roistering knights-at-arms
All bound for Zurich's tournament,
Had craved at noon the convent's alms,
And though we fasted, it being Lent,
No less we gave them food anew,
In the great barn without the gate—
Because they were so rough a crew—
Yet, having feasted long and late,
They stormed at last the postern door
And sacked the buttery for more ;
Then one cried “Nassau !” Straightway one,
“Hapsburg !” The battle was begun.

So spake the Sister, saying "Pray
That Christ forgive their sins to-day !"

But I looked still before me where
The unseemly blows and clamour were,
And cold my heart grew, stiff and cold,
For I had prayed so much of old,
So vainly for these knights-at-arms,
Who filled the country with alarms—
Too often had I prayed in vain,
Too often put myself in pain
For these irreverent, brawling, rough,
And godless knights—I had prayed enough !

"Let God," I cried, "do all He please ;
I pray no more for such as these."

Then swift I turned and fled, as though
I fled from sin, and strife, and woe,
Who fled from God, and from His grace.
Nor stayed I till I reached the place
Where I had prayed an hour ago.

I stood again beneath the shade
The flowering apple-orchard made ;
The grass was still as tall and green,
As fresh as ever it had been.
I heard the little rabbits rush
As swiftly through the wood ; the thrush
Was singing still the self-same song,
Yet something there was changed and wrong.
Or through the grass or through my heart
Some deadly thing had passed athwart,
And left behind a blighting track ;
For the old peace comes never back.
The gift of God was mine ; I lost
For aye the gift of Pentecost,

* * * *

JÜTZI SCHULTHEISS

God knows how I am humbled, how
There is in all the convent now
No novice half so weak and poor
In all esteem as I ; the door
I keep, and wait on passers-by,
And lead the cattle out to browse,
And wash the beggars' feet ; even I
Who was the glory of our house.

Yet dares my soul rejoice because,
Though I have failed, though I have sinned,
Not less eternal are the laws
Of God, no less the sun and wind
Declare His glory than before,
Though I am fallen, and faint, and poor.
Nay, should I fall to very Hell,
Yet am I not so miserable
As heathen are, who know not Him,
Who makes all other glories dim.
O God, believed in still though lost,
Yet fill me with Thy Holy Ghost—
Let but the vision fill mine eye
An instant ere the tear be dry ;
Or, if Thou wilt, keep hid and far,
Yet art Thou still the secret star
To which my soul sets all her tides,
My soul that recks of nought besides.
Have not I found Thee in the fire
Of sunset's purple after-glow ?
Have not I found Thee in the throe
Of anguished hearts that bleed and tire ?
God, once so plain to see and hear,
Now never answering any tear.
O God, a guest within my house
Thou wert, my love thou wert, my spouse ;
Yet never known so well as now,
Now the ash whitens on my brow,
And cinders on my head are tossed ;
Because the gift I had I lost.

Constance and Martuccio

(After Boccaccio.)



O LOVE, that steepest all our years
In sorrow, making present bliss
Bitter with recollected tears,
Surely even death thy guerdon is !
But ah, could parting lovers die,
They would not mourn, they would not sigh,
Not death they fear, but dread the parting kiss.

O Love, that bathest all our dreams
In glory, since apart, afar,
The phantom of the loved one seems
More real than men and women are ;
O Love, that when our blood runs chill
Floods all the heart with memory still ;
Sweet-bitter Love, be still our guiding-star !

I praise thee, while I mourn the woe
Of Constance, beautiful and good,
Of Constance and Martuccio,
Twin lovers since their babyhood.
Alas for either breaking heart
The day is come when lovers part ;
For so decrees a father cold and shrewd.

CONSTANCE AND MARTUCCIO

And they must part ! To Barbary
With freighted ships Martuccio,
To win what treasure there may be,
To fight and spoil the paynim foe,
To half-forget his lady's eyes
In traffic of rare merchandise,
While she remains and waits—'Tis harder so.

"Take comfort," says Martuccio.
"Think what delight shall ours be soon
When I return, as now I go . . .
And is not Love so large a boon
That lovers losing happiness
Let slip a thing so vastly less,
As men in sunlight think not on the moon ?"

He ceased. With grief he dared not tell.
He called her "Love," he called her "Bride,"
Gave one long kiss, one brief farewell . . .
She fell against the fountain-side
And lay awhile there, moaning low,
"Martuccio ! Ah, Martuccio !"
With passionate eyes that weep not, strained and wide.

And all the days and half the nights
She sat upon the fountain-stair,
Till brooding on her lost delights
Made loneliness grow lonelier there.
If other maidens came her way
They ceased their song and hushed their play,
And with bowed heads went on and prayed for her.

Until a year had passed and fled.
The world again in flower with spring
Made even Constance raise her head,
Made even Constance smile and sing ;
And in that May there came a man
Weary and travel-worn and wan,
As one returned from perilous wandering.

CONSTANCE AND MARTUCCIO

Came underneath the myrtle-trees,
Saw Constance by the fountain stand
With lilies reaching to her knees,
With roses set on either hand.
About her knees the lilies rise
Like starry flowers look her eyes—
She stands like spring and smiles upon the land.

He stayed awhile and looked at her
With such sad meaning in his face
It seemed as though he could not bear
To ruin all her tender grace.
Then in his hand he took a ring,
And sighed awhile to hear her sing :
“Come back, my Love, come home, for Spring is
here !”

He sighed, and kneeling where she stood,
Said, “Lady, I have news to tell !”
“Now Mary grant thy news be good !”
Said Constance, white as lily-bell.
“I am a sailor, lady dear,
It was my captain sent me here—
Martuccio Gómito. . . . “Pray Heaven he’s well !”

“Lady, the spring to-day is fair,
But it must know a winter’s blight.
Lady, the lilies that you wear
Will wither long before the night”—
“What ! Came you from so far away
To tell me it is Spring to-day ?
Tell what you dare not tell ! Kill me outright !”

“Constance, my lord is very ill.”
“Ah, Heaven,” she cried, “my love is dead !
I love him !” said she, calm and still.
“Have you no word from his deathbed ?”
“At the last hour this ring he gave,
Saying something, but a whelming wave
Drowned it and him, and all but me,” he said.

“ But often would he speak of you ”
(Still Constance stood as still as stone).

“ Nay, Lady, weep. I loved him too.
Have you no grief that he is gone ?
That he went down at sea one night,
Coming to claim his heart’s delight ? ”

—“ I prithee leave me (Constance said) alone.”

He went ; she sat there hours on hours
And gazed on that remembered ring.
The night wind chilled to death her flowers,
She felt not it nor anything.
At last she raised her tearless eyes,
Saw the night-quiet in the skies,
And heard the nightingales begin to sing.

She wandered where the lilies stood
Like spirits that would shelter her,
But she in her white maidenhood
Made even lilies look less fair,
She wrapt round shoulders, breast and head,
A heavy cloak of faded red,
And where the streamlet went she follow’d there.

Musing—this heart I dare not strike,
He loved it. Neither lips he found
So sweet, must poison touch. Belike
I should remember underground,
How all the land and all the sea,
Lies cold between my love and me.
Would God I were with him where he lies drown’d !

And ever where the streamlet went,
Fearless through sorrow, followed she ;
Above the branches creaked and bent,
Where the wind caught them, heavily.
The owls shrieked and the ravens mourned,
But Constance never stayed or turned,
But went straight on, towards an unseen sea.

CONSTANCE AND MARTUCCIO

Until where thorns once caught her feet
Thin rushes bent, and at the noise
The timid lizards made retreat,
And wild duck rose, fearing decoys ;
She looked, and lo ! the trees were gone
And overhead the white moon shone,
And wet the earth shone, that the sea destroys.

She followed where the waters led,
(Grown wide and shallow) o'er the sands.
The north-wind whistled round her head
And clasped her close with airy hands,
Fain to forget the drowning cries
Of sailors and their widows' sighs,
And caught her hair and loosed it from its bands.

At last, behold on either side
And all before her waters were,
White waters desolate and wide,
And here the wind blew roughlier.
She leant against a tall black stake
Of driftwood—such as fishers make,
To keep their boats safe when they are not there.

She kissed her ring and looking down,
She wept such shallow waves to see,
So shallow that they could not drown—
“How shall I die and come to thee,
My lost Martuccio !” she cried.
And then a twisted rope she spied
That held to a stake some boatlet out at sea.

She strained upon it with her hands
That left red stains where they had stayed ;
Her feet go sinking through the sands,
And through the out-drifting waters wade ;
She reached the boat, she slipt the rope,
And, taking leave of life and hope,
Lay down upon the planks, and dreamed, and prayed.

CONSTANCE AND MARTUCCIO

And as she 'gan to pray and weep
A quiet fell on sea and sky,
The rough waves cradled her to sleep,
The north-wind sang her lullaby,
And all the stars came out to see
That she was sleeping peacefully,
Who slept all night, all day, until the night grew nigh.

* * * * *

At morning Prince Martuccio
Looked out across the southern sea
That shipwreck'd him a year ago—
He who was once our enemy,
Who now is grown beloved and great,
Who saved the King and saved the State,
Who reigns the proudest prince in Barbary.

And he is great and young and rich,
Yet often by the sea he stands,
As though his straining eyes would reach
The secrets of imagined lands.
And thus he saw a little craft,
And watched the gentle breezes waft
It slowly on towards the Moorish sands.

As wanderers where no^a water is,
With blackened tongue and aching throat,
Finding a fruit-tree, full of bliss
Strip it of its desired load,
And ask not, is it good or bad
Or poison-sweet to send men mad :
So yearned Martuccio towards the little boat.

And knowing not wherefore he yearned,
He watched it while it came his way,
And felt not how the hot sun burned
Nor any drenching of the spray.
At last, when noon-day heat was o'er
The boat struck sharp against the shore,
Martuccio stept therein—where something lay.

CONSTANCE AND MARTUCCIO

A mantle, first, of faded red,
And then a robe of laurel-green,
Then a beloved brown-rippled head
With sleep-flushed face the curls between,
“Constance,” he cried, “Constance awake !
How came you hither ?—for my sake ?
Or has our year-long parting never been ? ”

She opened wide her happy eyes
That shone so strangely sweet and bright ;
She said—“ We are in Paradise,
I too was lost at sea last night,
What ? did you think when you were drown’d,
I could stay happy on dry ground ?
No, no, I came to you, my heart’s delight.”

Then all her passion overcame
A maid who knew no maiden’s art,
And calling on Martuccio’s name
She threw herself upon his heart.
But seeing how her lover smiled
She grew to earth right reconciled,
And nevermore did these true lovers part.

For in the palace of the King
They two were wed in Barbary,
And plighted with the self-same ring
That with both lovers crost the sea,
And crost at last with both together
When in the calmest summer weather
They too set sail for home and Sicily.

*Philumene to Aristides*¹



MASTER, for love's sake, thank me not for this
That I am dying for thee, who should miss
My crown of life and reason of my days
Did I not spend them for thee ; thanks or praise
I covet not for such a little thing.
Only when in the tenderness of spring
Thou wanderest afterwards where woods are fair,
Then, noting clearer colour in the air,
Or new unusual sweetness in the song
Of lark or linnet, or, amid the throng
Of delicate flowers, one whose hue hath caught
The secret hope wherewith the spring is fraught ;
Think then, " These are a message sent to me
From the dear angel of my memory."
So, being yet remembered of you, I
Shall live, who in thy death must surely die.
For often as I watch and weep and moan,
Praying for thee through all the night alone,
A sudden terror catches at my heart ;
A spasm of anguish shoots through every part,
A fire burns through my palms and through my feet.
My wet eyes throb and strain in aching heat,

¹ Aristides being sick unto death, his pupil Philumene makes a bargain with the gods, who accept her life in exchange for his.

PHILUMENE TO ARISTIDES

And in the solitary dark I moan
For weariness, and sob all night alone
Vain prayers for help, and toss in vexed unrest.
And find no way to endure, for none is best ;—
Then, suddenly, a spirit makes it plain
That through my fever thou art free of pain ;
Thou sleepest safe, my friend ! I bear for thee
What is no anguish, nay, but joy for me—
Ay, joy ; ay, glee ;—such laughter in me wakes
That oftentime my swelling throat nigh breaks !
Ah, then no more I sorrow ! Till at last
My fever-fit and thy relief be past,
When all my soul protests, and prays in vain
My ending torture may begin again.

Likewise, when I make merry among my friends
In song or laughter, soon my pleasure ends.
My soul is shaken with a storm of fears,
An anxious presage strains mine eyes to tears,
I faint and yearn with unexplained regret
For some prenatal blessing I forget.
Unless indeed so close our natures be,
Thy pain untold, unknown, is pain to me. . . .
So by thy joy of life, unknown, untold,
I, in the shadow of death, shall be consoled !

Lo now, it were no marvellous thing, should I,
For mine own sake, long in thy stead to die.
For am not I the prey of all thy pains ?
Doth not thy fever burn and surge in my veins ?
Indeed, my friend, I cannot even tell
If thou being dead, my life were possible.
But thou, O master and lord ! O soul of me !
Hast no such double sense ; my life to thee
Is needless, unrequired, save as a price,
Readily paid though poor, which shall suffice
To cheat the envious darkness of thy days.

But I to all the gods in heaven give praise
That I, a woman, none remembereth,

PHILUMENE TO ARISTIDES

I, even I, shall turn aside thy death ;
My lips shall taste the black and bitter wine
Faint ghosts in Hades press even now for thine,
And I shall mix with the earth, but thou go whole
Since for thy soul I render up my soul.
Shall not I thank the gods and sing, being glad
That in their eyes my prayer such favour had?
For thou shalt live, triumphant over death ! . . .
The sharp, last agony, the catch in the breath,
The ache of the starting eyes, the red, blind night,
The fruitless search of hands that grasp at light,
And, worst of all, the horror of what may be,
Thou shalt not know, but I, but I, for thee.

The Widower of Haiderabad



At morning when I wake, no more
I hear her in the twilit hour,
Who beats the clay upon the floor,
Or grinds the sorghum into flour.

And when at sunset I return,
I half forget the quiet child,
Still brightening up her brazen urn,
Who never raised her head or smiled.

But when the night draws on, I fear !
. . . She stands before me, pale as ash,
And still the trembling voice I hear
That bleats beneath my mother's lash.

And I remember how she died—
Hanged to the flowering mango-bough ;
For I behold the Suicide,
And it is I that tremble now.

. . . My mother wears upon her breast
A silver image of the dead.
The best of all we have the best
We offer her with bended head.

THE WIDOWER OF HAIDERABAD

We scatter water on her grave,
We burn the sacred lamps for her ;
For her the fumes of incense wave
And fill the house with smells of myrrh.

* * * *

. . . The day we bore her to the tomb
We paused again and yet again
To scatter down the sandy coomb
Our mustard seed in ample rain.

For so we knew that in the night,
When homewards up the path she goes,
All round her in the dreamy light
A pale phantasmal garden blows.

She laughs to see the unhopèd-for cloud
Of waving, swaying, golden flowers,
And gathering up her trailing shroud
She flits amid the stems for hours.

So every night may she delay
And fill her arms with faëry bloom,
Until the dawning of the day
Recall the wanderer to the tomb !

So we may sleep in safety here,
And fear no ghost. . . . And yet, for hours,
I feel her drifting slowly near
Amid the withering mustard flowers.

O God ! to them that call on Thee
Give life, give riches, make them strong,
Or make them holy,—but to me
Let not Thy midnight be so long !

The Deer and the Prophet



A HUNTSMAN, enemy of those
Who praise the prophet Mahomet,
Far in the forest laid his net,
And laid it deep in tangled brier-rose
And tufts of daffodil and thyme and violet.

One early morning, pink and grey
As early mornings are in May
A fallow deer went forth to take the air ;
And wandering down the forest glades that way
She fell into the snare.

Alas, poor soul, 'twas all in vain
She sought to venture back again,
Or bounded forth with hurrying feet,
Or plucked with horn and hoof the net ;
Too well the mazy toils were set
Around her russet ankles neat.

All hope being gone, she bowed her innocent head
And wept. "O Heaven, that is most just," she
said,

"In thy mysterious ends I acquiesce ;
Yet of thy mercy deign to bless
The little ones I left at home :
Twin fawns, still dreaming on their bracken-bed
When I went forth to roam,
And wandered careless where the net was spread.

THE DEER AND THE PROPHET

“And yet, O Heaven, how shall they live,
Poor yeanelings, if their mother die ?
Their only nourishment am I ;
They have no other food beside the milk I give,
And save my breast no warmth at night,
While still the frost lies crisp and white,
As lie it will until the roses blow.”
And here she fetched so deep a sigh
That her petition could no further go.

Now as she hushed, the huntsman strode in sight
Who every morning went that way
To see if Heaven had led the hoped-for prey
Into his nets by night.
And when he saw the fallow deer,
He stood and laughed aloud and clear,
And laid his hand upon her neck
Of russet with a snowy fleck,
And forth his hunting-knife he drew :
“Aha !” he cried, “my pretty dame,
Into my nets full easily you came ;
But forth again, my maiden, spring not you !”
And as he laughed, he would have slit
The throat that saw no help from it.
But lo ! a trembling took the air,
A rustling of the leaves about the snare ;
And Some-one, dusk and slim,
There, sudden, stayed his hand and smiled at him.

Now, never was there huntsman yet
Who, when the tangled snare was set
And in the snare the comely game,
Endured the loosening of the net.

Our huntsman turned an angry face aflame,
And none the lesser was his wroth
To see none other, by my troth,
Than Mahomet himself, the immortal Mahomet,
Who stood beside the net.

THE DEER AND THE PROPHET

“Ha, old Impostor!” he began—
But “Peace,” the prophet said, “my man;
For while we argue, you and I,
The hungry fawns are like to die.
Nay, let the mother go. Within an hour, I say,
She shall return for thee to spare or slay;
Or, if she be not here,
Then I will stand your slave in surety for the
deer.”

The huntsman turned and stared a while.
“For sure, the fool is void of guile!
Well, he shall be my slave i’ sooth,
And work as in his idle youth
He never worked, the rogue!” Our huntsman
laughed for glee,
And bent and loosed the tangles joyfully:
And forth the creature bounded, wild and free.

But when she reached the bracken-bed,
Where still the young ones lay abed
Below the hawthorn branches thick—
“Awake,” she cried, “my fawns, and milk me
quick;
For I have left within the net
The very prophet Mahomet!”

“Ah!” cried the little fawns, and heard
(But understood not half a word).
“Quick, quick, our little mother, quick away,
And come back all the quicker!” cried the fawns,
And called a last goodbye;
And sat a little sad, they knew not why,
And watched their mother bounding, white and
grey,
Dim in the distance, o’er the dewy lawns
And wide, unfriendly forests all in flower.
And so the deer returned within an hour.

“Now,” said the prophet, smiling, “kill
Or take the ransom, as you will.”

THE DEER AND THE PROPHET

But on his knees the huntsman fell,
And cried aloud : " A miracle !
Nay, by my nets and hunting-knife,
I will not take the creature's life ;
And, for a slave, until I die,
Thou hast no trustier slave than I ! "

No creature is so hard beset,
But lo ! the undreamed-of Angel yet
May interpose his power, and change the end.
And no one is so poor a friend,
Or so diminished to the dust,
But may be worthy of a heavenly trust.

The Slumber of King Solomon



THE house is all of sandal-wood
And boughs of Lebanon,
The chamber is of beaten gold
Where sleeps King Solomon.

With thirty horsemen to the left
And thirty to the right,
Upon their mighty horses set
To guard him from the night.

They watch as silent as the moon,
Drawn sword and gathered rein ;
They will not stir till Solomon
Shall rise and move again.

And whiter than their white armour,
Brighter than spear or sword,
Four Angels guard the dreaming King,
Four Angels of the Lord.

Four Angels at the four corners,
And burning over head
The Glory of God, the great Glory
That never shall be said.

Sleep well, sleep well, King Solomon,
For He that guardeth thee,
He neither slumbers, nay, nor sleeps,
Through all eternity.

With thirty horsemen to the left
And thirty to the right,
Sleep well, sleep well, King Solomon,
Sleep through the eternal night.

THE NEW ARCADIA



The Hand-Bell Ringers

OR WITHIN AND WITHOUT



I.

LAST night the ringers came over the moor
To ring us in Christmas-tide ;
They entered in at our garden door :
We sat and watched the yule logs roar,
They stood on the grass outside.

We sat within, i' the warmth and light,
The fire leapt red and blue ;
Each frosted lamp was a moon of white
The growing plants half hid from sight,
Letting the radiance through.

The white and the red lights filled the room,
And flickered on bracket and ledge,
On the pale sweet pinks and the cactus bloom,
With its crimson flush, and the leafy gloom
O' the sill's geranium-hedge.

We sat, making merry, shut in from the rain
And the Christmas cold outside.
But hark ! the carol goes pealing again ;
The ringers are out in the cold, 'tis plain,
Ringing in Christmas-tide.

THE HAND-BELL RINGERS

II.

I left the fire with its flicker and roar,
And drew the curtains back.
On the edge of the grass stood the ringers four ;
A dim white railing behind, and the moor
A waste of endless black,

With, somewhere burning, aloof, afar,
A single lonely light ;
But never a glimmer of moon or star
To show where the unseen heavens are
Through the whole dark width o' the night.

In front of the rail, in a shadowy row,
Stood the ringers, dim and brown ;
Their faces burned with a faded glow,
And spots of light, now high, now low,
With the bells leapt up and down.

But gaze ! the figure, barely guessed,
The shadowy face grows clear :
The tall, red prophet who leads the rest,
The fallow lad with the hollow chest ;
You see them all appear.

You catch the way they look and stand,
The listening clench of the eyes ;
The great round hand-bells, golden and grand,
Grasped a couple in either hand,
And the arms that fall and rise.

III.

So much I behold, and would never complain,
As much and no more could I see.
As clear as air is the window pane
'Twixt me in the light and them in the rain,
Yet strange they look to me !

THE HAND-BELL RINGERS

Grim, solemn figures, all in a row,
 Intent on the carol they ring ;
But I see no less i' the pane aglow
The flowers reflected, and to and fro
 The flames their flicker fling.

My ribbon breast-knot dances across
 The leader's solemn brow ;
The moony lamps burn low i' the moss ;
And my own pale face, as it seems, they toss,
 With the ringing hand-bells now.

So dark is the night, so dark, alas !
 I look on the world, no doubt ;
Yet I see no less i' the window-glass,
The room within than the trees and grass
 And men I would study without.

The Old Couple

(THE WORKHOUSE—OLD STYLE)



An old wife speaks :

THE bracken withers day by day,
The furze is out of bloom.
Over the common the heather is grey,
And there's no gold left on the broom ;
And the least wind flutters a golden fleck
From three tall aspens that grow in the beck.

Yet, oh, I shall miss it to-morrow night,
The wild, rough sea of furze ;
And the cows coming down, looking large and white,
And the tink of each bell as it stirs,
The aspens brushing the tender sky,
And the whirr of the geese as they homeward fly.

'Tis the first grief ever I owned to mind
Until to-night, good neighbour ;
For I could work when John went blind,
And I never dreaded labour ;
And Willie grew so good a son,
We never fretted, I and John.

THE OLD COUPLE

Ah, me ! We've waited here at the gate
Many and many an even,
When Willie lingered a little late ;
And I've thought it seemed like Heaven,
To stand, the work all done, and look
At the yellow and pink o' the sky in the brook.

And John, I know, though he's blind as a stone,
And bent with a life of pain,
He'll miss it sore when he sits alone,
And wish he could see it again—
As though it were Heaven itself. Ah, me !
There's only clouds that the blind can see.

But he'll be apart in one long room,
And I as strange in another ;
At the end of the day I'll sit down in the gloom,
And be no man's wife or mother ;
And I'll miss his voice and the tap of his stick
Till my throat grows choked and my sight grows thick.

I'll not be dull ? There are people enough
In the House ? Is that what you say ?
Yes, every one there that I do not love,
And only my man away :
Voices and steps coming in and out,
But never the one that I care about.

I'd rather starve in the snow with John !
But that 'ud be wicked, I know ;
Indeed, we might live with our only son,
And never stir out in the snow.
But burden his back with our useless lives,
And palsy the arm that struggles and strives.

Nay, Will has another to think of—my Will.
'Tis time the lad was wed ;
He's waited long, he would wait still,
Till John and I were dead :
But better the Poorhouse, better far,
Than only to live as a fret and a bar.

THE OLD COUPLE

Ah, we remember, I and John,
The waiting till youth is spoiled ;
I'd never owe my bread to a son,
And sit while he toiled and moiled,
And see the lass he hoped to wive
Grow old unmarried, since I was alive.

That was the way in our time, though,
But I never liked the way !
It kept us single till forty, I know,
And married us old and grey ;
And set me only one child on my knee ;
Who shall not suffer as much from me.

And so to-morrow we leave the place
To go to the House up yon.
Yes, as you say, 'tis a sad disgrace ;
We've worked hard, I and John :
We've worked until we can work no more. . . .
The Lord shouldn't grant a long life to the poor.

The Scape-Goat



SHE lived in the hovel alone, the beautiful child.

Alas, that it should have been so !

But her father died of the drink, and the sons were
wild,

And where was the girl to go ?

Her brothers left her alone in the lonely hut.

Ah, it was dreary at night

When the wind whistled right thro' the door that never
would shut,

And sent her sobbing with fright.

She never had slept alone ; when the stifling room

Held her, brothers, father—all.

Ah, better their violence, better their threats, than the
gloom

That now hung close as a pall !

When the hard day's washing was done, it was sweeter
to stand

Hearkening praises and vows,

To feel her cold fingers kept warm in a sheltering
hand,

Than crouch in the desolate house.

THE SCAPE-GOAT

Ah, me ! she was only a child ; and yet so aware
Of the shame which follows on sin.
A poor, lost, terrified child ! she stept in the snare,
Knowing the toils she was in.

Yet, now, when I watch her pass with a heavy reel,
Shouting her villainous song,
It is only pity or shame, do you think, that I feel
For the infinite sorrow and wrong ?

With a sick, strange wonder I ask, Who shall answer
the sin,
Thou, lover, brothers of thine ?
Or he who left standing thy hovel to perish in ?
Or I, who gave no sign ?

Church-going Tim



TIM BBLACK is bedridden, you say ?
Well now, I'm sorry. Poor old Tim !
There's not in all the place to-day
A soul as will not pity him.

These twenty years, come hail, come snow,
Come winter cold, or summer heat,
Week after week to church he'll go
On them two hobbling sticks for feet.

These years he's gone on crutches. Yet
One never heard the least complaint.
And see how other men will fret
At nothing ! Tim was quite a saint.

And now there's service every day,
I say they kep' it up for him ;
We busier ones, we keep away—
There's mostly no one there but Tim.

CHURCH-GOING TIM

Yes, quite a saint he was. Although
He never was a likely man
At his own trade ; indeed, I know
Many's the day I've pitied Nan.

She had a time of it, his wife,
With all those children and no wage,
As like as not, from Tim. The life
She led ! She looked three times her age.

The half he had he'd give to tramps
If they were hungry, or it was cold—
Pampering up them idle scamps,
While Nan grew lean and pinched and old.

He'd let her grumble. Not a word
Or blow from him she ever had—
And yet I've heard her sigh, and heard
Her say she wished as he wur bad.

Atop of all the fever came ;
And Tim went hobbling past on sticks.
Still one felt happier, all the same,
When he'd gone by to church at six.

Not that I wished to go. Not I !
With Joe so wild, and all those boys—
It takes my day to clean, and try
To settle down the dust and noise.

But still—out of it all, to glance
And see Tim hobbling by, so calm,
As though he heard the angels' chants
And saw their branching crowns of palm.

And when he smiled, he had a look :
One's burden seemed to lose and roll
Like Christian's in the picture-book !
It was a comfort, on the whole.

CHURCH-GOING TIM

It made one easier-like, somehow—

It made one, somehow, feel so sure,
That far above the dust and row
The glory of God does still endure.

You say he's well, though he can't stir :

I'm sure you mean it kind—But, see,
It's not for him I'm crying, sir,
It's not for Tim, sir ; it's for me.

The Wise-Woman



IN the last low cottage in Blackthorn Lane
The Wise-woman lives alone ;
The broken thatch lets in the rain,
The glass is shattered in every pane
With stones the boys have thrown.

For who would not throw stones at a witch ?
Take any safe revenge
For the father's lameness, the mother's stitch,
The sheep that died on its back in a ditch,
And the mildewed corn in the grange ?

Only be sure to be out of sight
Of the witch's baleful eye !
So the stones, for the most, are thrown at night,
Then a scuffle of feet, a hurry of fright—
How fast those urchins fly !

The witch's garden is run to weeds,
Never a phlox or a rose,
But infamous growths her brewing needs,
Or slimy mosses the rank soil breeds,
Or tares such as no man sows.

THE WISE-WOMAN

This is the house. Lift up the latch—
Faugh, the smoke and the smell !
A broken bench, some rags that catch
The drip of the rain from the broken thatch—
Are these the wages of Hell ?

The witch—who wonders ?—is bent with cramp.
Satan himself cannot cure her,
For the beaten floor is oozing damp,
And the moon, through the roof, might serve for a lamp,
Only a rushlight's surer.

And here some night she will die alone,
When the cramp clutches tight at her heart,
Let her cry in her anguish, and sob, and moan,
The tenderest woman the village has known
Would shudder—but keep apart.

May she die in her bed ! A likelier chance
Were the dog's death, drowned in the pond.
The witch when she passes it looks askance :
They ducked her once, when the horse bit Nance ;
She remembers, and looks beyond.

For then she had perished in very truth,
But the Squire's son, home from college,
Rushed to the rescue, himself forsooth
Plunged after the witch.—Yes, I like the youth
For all his new-fangled knowledge.—

How he stormed at the cowards ! What a rage
Heroic flashed in his eyes !
But many a struggle and many an age
Must pass ere the same broad heritage
Be given the fools and the wise.

“Cowards !” he cried. He was lord of the land
He was mighty to them, and rich.
They let him rant ; but on either hand
They shrank from the devil's unseen brand
On the sallow face of the witch.

THE WISE-WOMAN

They let him rant ; but, deep in his heart,
Each thought of some thing of his own
Wounded or hurt by the Wise-woman's art ;
Some friend estranged, or some lover apart.
Their hearts grew cold as stone.

And the Heir spoke on, in his eager youth,
His blue eyes full of flame ;
And he claspt the witch, as he spoke of the Truth ;
And the dead, cold Past ; and of Love and of Ruth—
But their hearts were still the same,

Till at last—" For the sake of Christ who died,
Mother, forgive them," he said.
" Come, let us kneel, let us pray ! " he cried . . .
But horror-stricken, aghast, from his side
The witch broke loose and fled !

Fled right fast from the brave amends
He would make her then and there ;
From the chance that Heaven so seldom sends
To turn our bitterest foes to friends,—
Fled, at the name of a prayer !

Poor lad, he stared so, amazed and grieved.
He had argued half an hour ;
And yet the beldam herself believed,
No less than the villagers she deceived,
In her own unholy power !

Though surely a witch should know very well
'Tis the lie for which she will burn.
She must have learned that the deepest spell
Her art includes could ne'er compel
A quart of cream to turn.

And why, knowing this, should one sell one's soul
To gain such a life as hers—
The life of the bat and the burrowing mole—
To gain no vision and no control,
Not even the power to curse ?

THE WISE-WOMAN

'Tis strange, and a riddle still in my mind
To-day as well as then.
There's never an answer I could find
Unless—O folly of humankind !
O vanity born with men !

Rather it may be than merely remain
A woman poor and old,
No longer like to be courted again
For the fallow face deep lined with pain,
Or the heart grown sad and cold.

Such bitter souls may there be, I think,
So craving the power that slips,
Rather than lose it, they would drink
The waters of Hell, and lie at the brink
Of the grave, with eager lips.

They sooner would, than slip from sight,
Meet every eye askance ;
Sooner be counted an imp of the night,
Sooner live on as a curse and a blight
Than just be forgotten ?

Perchance.

The Rothers



As far as you can see, the moor
Spreads on and on for many a mile,
And hill and dale are covered o'er
With many a fragrant splash and isle
Of vivid heather, purple still,
Though bracken is yellow on dingle and hill.

The heather bells are stiff and dry,
Yet honey is sweet in the inmost cell ;
The bracken's withered that stands so high,
But sleeping cattle love it well.
Thorny fern and honeyless heather,
A friend who chills with the blighting weather.

A mile towards the western sun
The Rothers have their wooded park ;
Never another so fair an one
Sees from his poise the singing lark.
When Rother of Rother first began
Recks not the memory of man.

It stands there still, a red old house,
Rother, set round with branchy pines ;
The heather is red beneath the boughs,
And red are the trunks where the slant sun shines,
And the earth is ruddy on hollow and height :
But the blood of a Rother's heart is white.

THE ROTHERS

Right royal faces, none the less,
And gracious ways when the world is kind ;
But trust a Rother in your distress,—
A hollow hemlock stem you find,
Where you looked for a sapling to cling to and save
You yet from the chasm below like a grave.

And now they are ended—the faithless race ;
Sir Thomas was never a Rother born,
He took the name when he took the place,
With the childless wife he laughs to scorn :
And his life is a cruel and evil life—
But let none pity his craven wife.

She—oh marvel of wonder and awe—
O angered patience of God !—I say
God sees our sins ; for a sign I saw
Set in the western skies one day—
White, over Rother, white and pale
For many a mile over hill and dale. . . .

Now let me make the marvel clear.
When Edward, last o' the Rother, died
He left two orphan daughters here :
Little children who scarce could ride,
Clutching the mane with baby hands,
O'er half an acre of their lands.

I think I see the sorrel mare,
Staid, old ; and, tumbled on her neck,
Flushed faces, dimpled arms, and hair
Of crimped flax with a golden fleck ;
As by the side, with timid graces,
Well to the fore, the prim nurse paces.

A pretty cavalcade ! Ah well,
The Rother ever loved a horse !
And so one day Sir Edward fell,
Out hunting ; dragged along the gorse
For yards, one foot i' the stirrup still,
The hunters found him upon the hill.

THE ROTHERS

They brought him home as cold as stone,
Into his house they bore him in ;
Nor at his burial any one
Was there to mourn him, of his kin,
Save those two babies, grave and grand
In black, who could not understand.

Poor wondering children, clad in crape,
Who knew not what they had to mourn,
Careful their sash should keep its shape
That papa, when he should return,
Might praise each little stiff new gown—
All day they never would sit down.

Poor, childish mutes, they stood all day
With outspread skirts and outspread hair,
And baby lips, less pink than grey
(So pale they were), and solemn stare ;
They watched our mourning, pained and dumb,
Wondering when papa would come,

And give them each a ride on his horse,
And toss them both in the air, and say
“A Rother is sure in the saddle, of course,
But never a Rother rode better than they,”
And sent them up to bed at last
To sleep till morning, sound and fast.

At last each whitish-flaxen head
Drooped heavily, each baby-cheek
Its pallid shadow-roses shed—
The straight black legs grew soft and weak—
Father and frocks alike forgot
They fell asleep, and sorrowed not,

Yet pitiable they were, alone
They were, twin heiresses of five,
With lands and houses of their own,
And never a friend in the world alive
Save one old great-aunt, over in France,
Who knew them not, nor cared, perchance.

THE ROTHERS

We little fancied she would come—

Quit palms, and sun, and table d'hôte
For two unknown small girls at home ;

But soon there came a scented note
With half the phrases underscored,
And French at every second word.

And soon she followed. She would sigh,

And clasp her hands, and swear "by God ;"
Her black wig ever slipped awry,

And quavered with a trembling nod ;
Her face was powdered very white,
Her black eyes danced under brows of night.

Such paint ! Yet were I ever to feel

Utterly lost, no saint I'd pray,
But, crooked of ringlets and high of heel,

I'd call to the rescue old Miss May ;
No haloed angel sweet and slender,
Were half so kind, so staunch, so tender.

She loved the children well, but most

The girl who least was like herself—
Maudie, at worst a plaintive ghost,

Maudie, at best a laughing elf,
With eyes deep flowering under dew,
Such tender looks of lazy blue.

Florence was stronger, commonplace

No doubt, but good, sincere, and kind ;
There was no Rother in her face.

There was no Rother I could find
Within her nature ; but who knows ?
My son shall not marry a daughter of Flo's.

You see I hate the Rotherers, I !

Unjust, perhaps ; all are not vile
It may be—but I cannot try,
When I think of a Rother now, to smile.
You hate the Jews, perhaps ? the Turks ?
In every heart some hatred lurks.

THE ROTHERS

But these two girls I never hated,
I thought them better than their race ;
Who would not think a curse out-dated
When from so fresh and young a face
The Rother eyes looked frankly out,
In the Rother smile no Rother's doubt ?

Well, they were young, and wealthy, and fair ;
It seemed not long since they were born,
When Florence married Lawrence Dare,
Then Maud, alas ! Sir Thomas Thorn—
A bitter, dark, bad, cruel man—
Sir Thomas, now, of the Rother clan.

For now we come to the very root
Of the passionate rancour I keep at heart
Flowering in words (but the bitter fruit
Is still unripe for its sterner part)
Well, Maud, too, married. Miss May was free
To go wherever she wished to be.

Homeless, after sixteen years
Of sacrifice ! Where could she go ?
But she, she smiled, choked back her tears,
"Of course," she said, "it must be so,
So kind, her girls, to let her come
Three months to each in her married home !"

And first at Rother with the Thorns
In her old home she stayed a guest ;
* * * * *

But must I think of all the scorns
That made your age a bitter jest,—
Whose memory like a star appears
Thro' the violent dark of that House of tears ?

Your Maud was changed ;—a craven slave
To her unloving husband now ;
The bitter words she could not brave,

THE ROTHERS

The silent hate of eyes and brow
Estranged her not ; and oh, 'tis true !
To gain his favour she slighted you.

And yet you stayed ! And yet you stayed—
Hoping to win your dear one back—
Thinking through pain, not sin, she strayed
From the old, good, well-known heavenly track.
Alas, your lamb had gone too far—
Farther from you than the farthest star.

* * * * *

At last the three months ended ; then
I heard Miss May was very ill ;
It was the first of autumn, when
Our roads are bad, so I chose the hill
And the brow of the moor, as I rode away
To Rother, where my good friend lay.

Now for my sunset ? Is 't not strange
That heaven, which sees a million woes
Unmoved, should pale, and faint, and change
At one more murder that it knows ?
And yet I think I could declare
A horror in that sunsét's glare.

As I was riding over the moor
My back was turned to the blazing white
O' the western sun, but all around
The country caught the brilliant light ;
The tufts of trees were yellow, not green ;
Grey shadows hung like nets between.

Such yellow hues on bush and tree !
Such sharp-cut shade and light I saw !
The white gates white as a star may be :
But every scarlet hip and haw,
Cluster of poppies, roof of red,
Had lost its colour, wan and dead !

THE ROTHERS

So strange the east, that soon I turned
To watch the shining west appear :
Under a billow of smoke there burned
A belt of blinding silver,—sheer
White length of light,—wherefrom there shone
A round, white, dazzling, rayless sun.

There mirror-like it hung and blazed,
And all the earth below was strange,
And all the scene whereon I gazed
Even to the view-line's farthest range,
Hill, steeple, moor, all, near and far,
Was flat as shifting side-scenes are.

Lifeless, a country in the moon
It seemed, that white and vague expanse,
So substanceless and thin, that soon
I fell to wonder, by some chance
Of a sketcher's fancy—how would fare
The tones of flesh in that white glare ?

A scruple of the painter's eye
Which notes all possible effect—
I scarcely daub, but I love to try.
Full of the whim, I recollect,
I stretched my own right arm and gazed :
The hand showed black where the sunlight blazed.

Too near, too near ! I smiled and turned,
I shook the reins and rode away,
Glanced where the eastern forest burned
With its gold-green oaks. But who were they
In the phaeton, there, beneath the trees ?
Let 'em prove my fancy ! A grip of the knees,

I reached them. Why, the Thorns they were !
The Thorns, livid and clear and plain
In the ugly light. Nor could I dare
Enquire if my friend were at ease or in pain,
So bitter-sour looked Maudie's mouth,
The whole face dried like grass in a drouth.

THE ROTHERS

But what's the figure bent and weak

Set up beside them, rolled in wraps ?
I saw it sway ; I could not speak.

I looked, let one long minute lapse
Then looked again . . . I stopped them. Saw—
Oh, is there then on earth no law ?

No thunder in Heaven ? As before,

It was indeed an old grey head
That jerked from side to side ; no more,

Only an old grey woman, dead,
That drives beside them, shawled and dressed . . .
They could not let her die at rest !

Wail, Maudie, wail your best ! I know

You had not thought her dead ; enough
You thought her dying, merely, and though

The air was cold, the road was rough,
Could say " Her three months' stay is o'er,
She is our promised guest no more.

" Now let her go to Florence Dare,

No need for us to nurse her now.
The drive will do her good, the air
Strike freshly on her fevered brow,
And, in the carriage, rugs are spread"—
Where, as you know, I found her dead,

Because they cast her away, my friend !

Because her nursling murdered her.

There, my long story has an end

At last. I leave you to infer
The moral, old enough to be true :
" Do good, and it is done to you."

But bid me not forgive and forget ;

Forget my friend, forget a crime,
Because the county neighbours fret

That I'll not meet at dinner-time
Ingratitude and murder ? Nay,
Touch pitch and be defiled, I say.

Men and Monkeys



THE hawthorn lane was full of flower ;
Across the hedge, the apple-trees
Sent down with every gust of breeze
A light, loose-petalled blossom-shower.

The wide green edges of the lane
Were filmed with kedlock-flowers, and white
Archangels tall, the bees' delight,
Sprang lustier for the morning's rain.

The scent of May was heavy-sweet ;
The noon poured down upon the land.
The nightingales on either hand
Called, and were silent in the heat.

The herds, the flowers, the nightingales
All drowsed ; and I upon the edge
Of grass beneath the flowering hedge
Lay dreaming of its shoots and trails.

When, starting at the sound of feet,
I saw the Italian vagrants pass ;
The monkey, man, and peasant-lass,
Who figure on our village street—

MEN AND MONKEYS

At race-time in the spring ; nor song,
Caper, nor hurdy-gurdy tune
Seemed left in them this blazing noon
As wearily they trudged along.

They did not pause to look upon
The apple-blossom and the may ;
They saw the road that reached away
Thro' leagues of dust, aye on and on.

They did not even stop to hear
The rare sweet call of the nightingale ;
The hurdy-gurdy's squeak and yell
Was too accustomed in their ear.

I watched them plod their stolid way
Straight on ; till suddenly I heard
The monkey mimic the singing-bird,
And snatch a trail of the flowering may.

And down the road I saw him still
Catching and clutching the blossom white,
Waving his long, black arms in delight,
Until they passed over the brow of the hill.

ROMANTIC BALLADS

The Tower of St. Maur



“WHERE’s my little son, Nourrice,
And whither is he gone ?
The youngest son of all I have,
He should not gang alone.”

“The child is safe enough, lady ;
He’s barely gone an hour :
He’s gone to see the mason-men,
Are building at the tower.”

“You should have kept him here, Nourrice,
If I was sleeping then—
He’s over young to gang alone
Among the mason-men.”

“Lie still, lie still, my sweet lady,
There’s nought to sorrow for ;
The child is safe enough, I think,
I’ the keeping of St. Maur !”

An hour’s gone by, an hour or two,
And still they’re out-of-door—

“I wish they’d come at last, Nourrice,
My heart is sick and sore.”

THE TOWER OF ST. MAUR

"Now hush, lady, my sweet lady,
The moon's still small and young ;
If they're home before the curfew bell
They'll not ha' stayed too long."

St. Maur has ta'en his youngest son,
To the riverside they're gone,
To see the busy mason-men
Building a tower of stone.

"O why do they build the tower so strong
Against the riverside ?
I never saw the wall, father,
That was so strong and wide."

"God knows the tower had need be strong
Between my foes and thee !
Should once Lord Armour enter, child,
An ill death would ye dee."

"We need not fear Lord Armour, father,
Nor any of his kin ;
Since God has given us such a wall,
They cannot enter in."

"O twice, my babe, and thrice, my babe,
Ere ever that I was born,
Lord Armour's men have entered in
Betwixt the night and the morn.

"And once I found my nurse's room
Was red with bloody men . . .
I would not have thy mother die
As died my mother then.

"And 'tis not seven nights ago
I heard, clear in a dream,
The bugle cry of Armour,
Shrill over wood and stream."

THE TOWER OF ST. MAUR

“ But if so foul a raid, father,
Fell out so long ago,
Why did they never build before
A wall and tower of stone ? ”

“ Many’s the time, my pretty babe,
Ere ever this way you went,
We built the tower both thick and broad—
An’ we might as well ha’ stent.

“ Many’s the time we built the tower,
Wi’ the grey stone and the brown.
But aye the floods in autumn
Washed all the building down.

“ And in my mind I see the morn
When we’ll be brought to dee—
Yoursel’ and your seven brothers,
And your young mother, and me.

“ And oh, were it any but Armour,
Oh God, were it any but she—
Before the Lord, my eyes grow dark
With the ill sight that I see.”

Among the busy mason-men,
Are building at the tower,
There’s a swarthy gipsy mason,
A lean man and a dour.

He’s lain the hammer down at last
Out of his bony hand . . .
“ Did ye never hear the spell, St. Maur,
Gars any tower to stand ? ”

“ O what’s the spell, thou black gipsy,
I prithee rede it now :
There never was a mason-man
Shall earn such wage as thou.”

THE TOWER OF ST. MAUR

"I dare not speak the spell, St. Maur,
Lest you should do me an ill,
For a cruel spell, and an evil spell,
Is the spell that works your will."

"There's no spell but I'll risk it, man,
An' the price were half my lands—
To keep my wife and children safe
Out of Lord Armour's hands."

"O, more than lands, and more than fee,
You'll pay me for the spell——"
"An' the price were half my heart's red blood,
I'd pay it down as well."

"O what's the blood of a sinful heart
To bind the stones that fall?
St. Maur, you'll build your christened child
Alive into the wall."

St. Maur has turned on his heel so light,
And angry he turns away :
"Gang to the devil another time
When ye ask what ye ask to-day."

He's ta'en his young son by the hand—
He's opened wide the gate,
"Your mother's been sick a month by now,
And she'll mourn sore if we're late."

They had not gone a little way,
An' the child began to call—
"See how the flood runs high, father,
And washes at the wall !"

They had not gone a mickle way,
St. Maur began to brood,
"'Tis the bugle cry of Armour,
Shrill over stream and wood."

THE TOWER OF ST. MAUR

“And must they slay me, father dear,
And my seven brothers tall?”
“Gin that’s the blast of Armour, laddie,
I fear they’ll slay us all.”

“And will they slay my mother, then,
That looks so bonny and small?”
“Come back, come back, thou little lad
To the masons at the wall.”

The flood runs high and still more high,
And washes stone from stone—
“In another hour,” say the masons,
“Our work is all undone.”

The flood runs high and still more high,
And the bugle rings anear;
The masons looking o’er the wall
Are blue and stark with fear.

There’s one that’s neither stark nor wan
But never he looked so well;
“Shall I gang to the devil, St. Maur?” he cries
“Or say, shall I gang to yoursel’?”

He’s set the child high in the air
Upon his shoulder bone;
“Shall I leave them all for Armour,
Or shall I take but one?”

Never an answer spake St. Maur,
And never a word he said:
There was not one o’ the mason-men
Looked half so wan and dead.

The gipsy’s ta’en the frightened child
And set him in the wall:
“There’s a bonny game to play, little man,
The bonniest game of all.

THE TOWER OF ST. MAUR

“ You’ll stand so still and stark, my lad ;
I’ll build in two’s and three’s ;
And I’ll throw you a red, red apple in,
When the stones reach to your knees.

“ You’ll stand so still and stark, my lad ;
I’ll lay the stones in haste ;
And I’ll throw you the forester’s whistle
When they reach above your waist.

“ You’ll stand so still and stark, my lad,
You’ll watch the stones that rise ;
And I’ll throw you in your father’s sword,
When they reach above your eyes.

“ And if you tire o’ the play, my lad,
You’ve but to raise a shout :
At the least word o’ your father’s mouth,
I’ll stop and pluck you out.”

The gipsy-man build quick and light,
As if he played a play,
And the child laughs with a frightened laugh,
And the tower ceases to sway.

St. Maur stares out of his bloodshot eyes,
Like one that’s well nigh mad ;
The tower stands fast, and the stones rise high
About the little lad.

“ O father, father, lift me out !
The stones reach over my eyes,
And I cannot see you now, father,
So swift the walls uprise.

“ O father, lift me out, father !
I cannot breathe at all,
For the stones reach up beyond my head,
And it’s dark down i’ the wall.”

THE TOWER OF ST. MAUR

But never an answer spake St. Maur,

Never a word but one :

“Have you finished your devil’s work, mason,
Or when will the deed be done ?”

“Oh, the work is done that ye wished, St. Maur,

’Twill last for many a year ;

There’s scarce a sound in the wall by now

A mother might not hear.

“Gang home, gang home in peace, St. Maur,

And sleep sound if you can ;

There’s never a flood shall rock this tower,

And never a mortal man.

“Gang home and kiss your bonny wife,

And bid her mourn and fast . . .

She’ll weep a year for her youngest child,

But she’ll dry her eyes at last.

“You’ll say he fell in the flood, St. Maur,

But you’ll not deceive yoursel’,

For you’ve lost the bonniest thing you had,

And you’ll remember well.

“Your wife will mourn him a year, St. Maur,

You’ll mourn him all your life,

For you’ve lost the bonniest thing you had,

Better than bairns or wife.”

The Duke of Gueldres' Wedding

(1405)



THE Queen and all her waiting maids
Are playing at the ball ;
Mary Harcourt, the King's cousin,
Is fairest of them all.

The Queen and all her waiting maids
Are out on Paris green ;
Mary Harcourt, the King's cousin,
Is fairer than the Queen.

The King sits in his council room,
The grey lords at his side,
And thro' the open window pane
He sees the game outside.

The King sits in the Council-room,
The young lords at his feet;
And through the pane he sees the ball,
And the ladies young and fleet.

" O bonny Mary Harcourt
Is seventeen to-day ;
'Tis time a lover courted her,
And carried her away.

" Where shall I give my own cousin ?
Where shall I give my kin ?
And who shall be the peer of France
Her slender hand to win ? "

THE DUKE OF GUELDRES' WEDDING

Then up and spake an old grey lord,
And keen, keen was his eye :
“ Your friends ye have already, Sire ;
Your foes ye'll have to buy.”

Then up and spake that old grey lord,
And keen, keen, was his glance :
“ Marry the girl to Gueldres, Sire,
And gain a friend to France ! ”

“ O how shall I wed my own cousin
To a little Flemish lord ? ”
—“ Nay ; Gueldres is a gallant duke
And girt with many a sword.”

“ What will the Duke of Limburg say
If such a deed be done ? ”
—“ Last night your foes were twain, my lord ;
To-day there'll be but one.”

“ Yet Limburg is a jealous man
And Gueldres quick and wroth.”
—“ To-morrow they'll hew each other down,
And you'll be quit of both ! ”

O blithe was Mary Harcourt
The blithest of them all.
When forth there stepped that old grey lord
Out of the Council-hall.

O sad was Mary Harcourt
And sorry was her face
When back there stepped that old grey lord
And left her in her place.

“ O shall I leave my own country,
And shall I leave my kin ? ”
O strange will be the Flemish streets
My feet shall wander in !

THE DUKE OF GUELDRES' WEDDING

"O shall I learn to brace a sword,
And brighten up a lance ?
I've learned to pull the flowers all day,
All night I've learned to dance !

"O shall I marry a Flemish knight,
And learn a Flemish tongue ?
Would I had died an hour ago,
When I was blithe and young ?"

Twice the moon and thrice the moon
Has waxed and waned away ;
The streets of Gueldres town are braw
With sammet and with say ;

And out of every window hang
The crimson squares of silk ;
The fountains run with claret wine,
The runnels flow with milk.

The ladies and the knights of France,
How gallantly they ride !
And all in silk and red roses
The fairest is the bride.

"Now welcome, Mary Harcourt,
Thrice welcome, lady mine ;
There's not a knight in all the world
Shall be so true as thine.

"There's venison in the aumbry, Mary,
There's claret in the vat.
Come in and dine within the hall
Where once my mother sat."

They had not filled a cup at dine,
A cup but barely four,
When the Duke of Limburg's herald
Came riding to the door.

THE DUKE OF GUELDRES' WEDDING

"O where's the Duke of Gueldres ?

O where's the groom so gay ?

My master sends a wedding-glove

To grace the wedding-day.

"O where's the Duke of Gueldres

Upon his wedding night :

That I may cast this iron glove

And challenge him to fight ? "

Gueldres is a gallant knight,

Gallant and good to see ;

So swift he bends to raise the glove,

Lifting it courteously.

His coat is of the white velvet,

His cap is of the black,

A cloak of gold and silver work

Hangs streaming at his back.

He's ta'en the cloak from his shoulders

As gallant as may be :

"Take this, take this, Sir Messenger,

You've ridden far for me !

"Now speed you back to Limburg

As quickly as you may,

I'll meet your lord to-morrow morn,

To-day's my wedding-day."

The morrow Mary Harcourt

Is standing at the door :

"I let him go with an angry word,

And I'll see him never more.

"Mickle I wept to leave my kin,

Mickle I wept to stay

Alone in foreign Gueldres, when

My ladies rode away.

THE DUKE OF GUELDRES' WEDDING

“ With tears I wet my wedding-sheets,
That were so fine and white—
But for one glint of your eye, Gueldres,
I'd give my soul to-night ! ”

O long waits Mary Harcourt,
Until the sun is down ;
The mist creeps up along the street,
And darkens all the town.

O long waits Mary Harcourt,
Till grey the dawn up springs ;
But who is this that rides so fast
That all the pavement rings ?

“ Is that youself in the dawn, Gueldres ?
Or is it your ghost so wan ? ”
—“ Now hush ye, hush ye, my bonny bride,
’Tis I, a living man.

“ There's blood upon my hands, Mary,
There's blood upon my lance.
Go in and leave a rougher knight
Than e'er ye met in France.”

“ O what's the blood of a foe, Gueldres,
That I should keep away ?
I did not love you yesternight ;
I'd die for you to-day.

“ I'll hold your dripping horse, Gueldres,
I'll hold your heavy lance :
I'd rather die your serving maid
Than live the Queen of France.”

He's caught her in his happy arms,
He's clasped her to his side.
Now God give every gallant knight.
As blithe and bonny a bride !

Rosamunda

(AFTER A PIEDMONTESE BALLAD)



“ Ah, love me, Rosamunda,
Now love me or I die ! ”
—“ Alas, how shall I love thee ?
A wedded wife am I.”

—“ And wilt thou, Rosamunda,
We put the man away ? ”
—“ Alas, how should we do it ? ”
—“ To-day or any day !

“ Within thy mother’s garden
An asp is in the vine :
Go, bray it in a mortar
And put it in his wine.”

* * * *

—“ Ho, wife ! Ho, Rosamunda !
Where art thou, low or high ?
For I am home from hunting
And sore athirst am I.”

ROSAMUNDA

—“The wine is in the goblet,
The wine is in the cup.
It stands upon the cupboard shelf;
Go, lift the cover up.”

—“Ho, wife ! Ho, Rosamunda !
Come hither, come and see ;
The good red wine is troubled . . .
How came this thing to be ?”

—“The sea wind yester even
Hath troubled it, I think.”

—“Come hither, Rosamunda !
Come hither, come and drink !”

—“Alas, how shalt I drink it
When I am not athirst ?”

—“Come hither, Rosamunda,
Come here and drink the first.”

—“Alas, how shall I drink it,
That never drank of wine ?”

—“Thou’lt quaff it, Rosamunda,
By this drawn sword of mine !”

—“I drink it to my lover,
I drink it, and I die !
My lover is the king of France—
A dead woman am I.”

Captain Gold and French Janet



THE first letter our Captain wrote
To the Lord of Mantua :
“ Did you ever see French Janet
(He wrote) on any day ? ”

“ Did ye ever see French Janet,
That was so blithe and coy ?
The little serving-lass I stole
From the mountains of Savoy ?

“ Last week I lost French Janet :
Hunt for her up and down ;
And send her back to me, my Lord,
From the four walls o’ the town.”

For thirty days and thirty nights
There came no news to us.
Suddenly old grew Captain Gold
And his voice grew tremulous.

O Mantua’s a bonny town,
And she’s long been our ally ;
But help came none from Mantua-town
Dim grew our Captain’s eye.

“ O send me Janet home again ! ”
Our Captain wrote anew ;
“ A lass is but a paltry thing,
And yet my heart’s in two !

CAPTAIN GOLD AND FRENCH JANET

“Ha’ ye searched in every convent-close,
And sought in every den ?
Mistress o’ man, or bride of Christ,
I’ll have her back again !

“O Mantua’s a bonny town,
And she’s long been our ally ;
But help cometh none from Mantua town ;
And sick at heart am I.”

For thirty days and thirty nights
No news came to the camp ;
And the life waned old in Captain Gold,
As the oil wanes in a lamp.

The third moon swelled towards the full
When the third letter he wrote :
“What will ye take for Janet ?
Red gold to fill your moat ?

“Red wine to fill your fountains full ?
Red blood to wash your streets ?
Oh, send me Janet home, my Lord,
Or ye’ll no die in your sheets !”

O Love, that makes strong towers to sway,
And captains’ hearts to fall !
I feared they might have heard his sobs
Right out to Mantua-wall.

For thirteen days and thirteen nights
No messenger came back ;
And when the morning rose again,
Our tents were hung with black.

The dead bell rang through all the camp ;
But we rung it low and dim,
Lest the Lombard hounds in Mantua
Should know the end of him.

A Ballad of Orleans

(1429)



THE fray began at the middle-gate,
Between the night and the day;
Before the matin bell was rung
The foe was far away.
No knight in all the land of France
Could gar that foe to flee,
Till up there rose a young maiden,
And drove them to the sea.

*Sixty forts around Orleans town,
And sixty forts of stone!
Sixty forts at our gates last night—
To-day there is not one!*

Talbot, Suffolk, and Pole are fled
Beyond the Loire, in fear—
Many a captain who would not drink
Hath drunken deeply there—
Many a captain is fallen and drowned,
And many a knight is dead,
And many die in the misty dawn
While the forts are burning red.

A BALLAD OF ORLEANS

*Sixty forts around Orleans town,
And sixty forts of stone !
Sixty forts at our gates last night—
To-day there is not one !*

The blood ran off our spears all night
As the rain runs off the roofs—
God rest their souls that fell i' the fight
Among our horses' hoofs !
They came to rob us of our own
With sword and spear and lance,
They fell and clutched the stubborn earth,
And bit the dust of France !

*Sixty forts around Orleans town,
And sixty forts of stone !
Sixty forts at our gates last night—
To-day there is not one.*

We fought across the moonless dark
Against their unseen hands—
A knight came out of Paradise
And fought among our bands.
Fight on, O maiden knight of God !
Fight on and never tire,
For lo ! the misty break o' the day
Sees all their forts on fire !

*Sixty forts around Orleans town,
And sixty forts of stone !
Sixty forts at our gates last night—
To-day there is not one.*

The Death of the Count of Armanac



“THERE'S nothing in the world so dear
To a true knight,” he cried,
“As his own sister's honour !
Now God be on our side ! ”

The walls of Alexandria
That stand so broad and high,
The walls of Alexandria
They answered to his cry.

And thrice, his trumpets blaring,
He rides around those walls ;
“Come forth, ye knights of Lombardy,
Ye craven knights ! ” he calls.

O luckless Count of Armanac,
Why rode ye forth at noon ?
Was there no hour at even ?
No morning cool and boon ?

THE DEATH OF THE COUNT OF ARMANAC

The swords of Alexandria
You kept them all at bay.
But oh, the summer sun at noon
It strikes more deep than they.

* * * *

Oh for a drink of water !
Oh for a moment's space
To loose the iron helm and let
The wind blow on his face !

He turned his eyes from left to right,
And at his hand there stood
The shivering white poplars
That fringe a little wood.

And as he reeled along the grass,
Behold, as chill as ice
The water ran beneath his foot,
And he thought it Paradise.

“ Armanac ! O Armanac ! ”
His distant knights rang out ;
And “ Armanac ” there answered them
The mountains round about.

O luckless Count of Armanac,
The day is lost and won :
Your hosts fight ill without a chief,
And the foe is three to one.

* * * *

At dusk there rides a Lombard squire,
With his train, into the copse,
And when they reach the water-side
The horse whinnies and stops.

THE DEATH OF THE COUNT OF ARMANAC

For dead beside the white water
A fallen knight they find ;
His helmet lies upon the grass,
His locks stir in the wind.

“Now speak a word, my prisoners !
What great captain is he
Who died away from battle
Alone and piteously ? ”

Woe ! and woe for Armanac,
And woe for all of us,
And for his sister's honour, woe,
That he be fallen thus !

For “where's the Count of Armanac ? ”
The Lombard women sing :
“He died at Alexandria—
Of the water of a spring ! ”

Thy name is made a mock, my Lord,
Thy vengeance still to pay,
And we must pine in Lombardy
For many and many a day !

Captain Ortis' Booty



CAPTAIN ORTIS (the tale I tell
Petit told in his chronicle)
Gained from Alva, for service and duty
At Antwerp's capture, the strangest booty.

Then each captain chose, as I hear,
That for guerdon he held most dear,
Craved what in chief he set heart of his on :
Out strode Ortis, and claimed . . . the prison !

Such a tumult ! for, be assured,
Greatly the judges and priests demurred ;
No mere criminals alone in that Stygian
Darkness died, but the foes of religion.

There lay heretics by the score,
Anabaptists, and many more,
Hard to catch ! To let loose, when caught, your
Timid hares, to forego the torture—

Folly ! Suddenly sank the noise.
Alva spoke in his steely voice :
“ He's my soldier, sans flaw or blemish ;
Let him burn as he likes these Flemish.”

CAPTAIN ORTIS' BOOTY

"Sire, as you please," the governor said,
"Only King Philip's edict read——"
"Alva spoke ! What is king or Cortes ?
Open the portals," cried Captain Ortis.

"Loose the prisoners, set them free.
Only—each pays a ransom-fee !"
Out, be sure, poured the gold in buckets,
Piles on piles of broad Flanders ducats.

Ay, there followed not gold alone ;
Men and women and children, thrown
In chains to perish, came out forgiven—
Saw light, friends' faces, and thought it heaven.

Out they staggered, so halt and blind
From rack and darkness, they scarce could find
The blessed gate where daughter and mother,
Father and brother, all found each other.

"Freedom ! Our darlings ! Let God be praised !"
So cried all ; then said one, amazed,
"Who is he, under Heaven, that gave us
Thought and pity ? who cared to save us ?"

"Captain Ortis " (the answer ran),
"The Spanish Lancer ; here's the man.
Ay, but don't kill him with too much caressing ;
Death's a sour salad with sweetest dressing."

Danger, indeed ; for never hath been
In brave old Antwerp such a scene.
Boldest patriot, fairest woman,
Blessing him, knelt to the Spanish foeman.

Ortis looted his prize of gold,
And yet, I think, if the truth be told,
He found, when the ducats were gone with the
pleasure,
That heretic blessing a lasting treasure.

CAPTAIN ORTIS' BOOTY

Yet my captain, to certain eyes,
Seems war-hardened and worldly-wise.
" 'Twere, for a hero," you say, "more handsome
To give the freedom, nor take the ransom."

True : but think of this hero's lot.
No Quixote he, nor Sir Launcelot,
But a needy soldier, half-starved, remember,
With cold and hunger that northern December ;

Just such an one as Parma meant
When he wrote to Philip in discontent—
"Antwerp must yield to our men ere much longer,
Unless you leave us to die of hunger.

"Wages, clothing, they do without,
Wine, fire even ; they'll learn, no doubt,
To live without meat for their mouths—they're zealous ;
Only they die first as yet, poor fellows."

Yes, and I praise him, for my part,
This man war-beaten and tough of heart,
Who, scheming a booty, no doubt, yet planned it
More like a hero, I think, than a bandit.

What ! My friend is too coarse for you ?
Will nought less than a Galahad do ? . . .
Rough and ready this soldier-sort is ;
Well—*half* a hero was Captain Ortis !

Sir Hugh and the Swans

(KUNG VON DER ROSEN. BRUGES, 1488)



THE wintry nights in Flanders
Lie thick about the grass ;
We stole between the sentinels,
They never saw us pass.

The mist was blue on field and fen,
And ridged the dykes with white ;
The camp-fires of the soldiers
Burned holes into the night.

They could not see us through the mirk :
We saw them in the glow.
A price was on our either head
And stealthy did we go.

We crept along the inner banks
Close to the waters grey—
We reached the castle at dawn, the castle
Where Max in prison lay.

(We blew the golden trumpets all
For joy, a year ago :
“ Long live the King o’ the Romans ! ”
The people cried as one.

SIR HUGH AND THE SWANS

Now, for the king in prison,
There's two will dare to die.
There's Hugh o' the Rose, the Jester,
Sir Hugh o' the Rose, and I.)

We came upon the castle moat
As the dawn was weak and grey :
"There's still an hour," quoth Hugh o' the Rose
"An hour till break of day.

"Give me the files, the muted files,
Give me the rope to fling ;
I'll swim to the prison window,
And hand them to the king.

"I'll swim to the castle and back, Sir John,
Before the morn is light,
And we'll both lie hid i' the rushes here
Till we take the boat to-night."

We tied the files, we tied the rope,
In a little leather sack.
Sir Hugh struck off from the mirky bank,
The satchel on his back.

I watched him cleave the wan water—
A bold swimmer was he.
My heart beat high in my bosom,
For I thought the king was free.

I watched him shoot the middle stream
And reach the other side—
"Fling up the rope," the king cried out—
That never should have cried.

The sun uprist beyond the dyke :
It was a deadly gleam.
The startled swans that sleep i' the moat
Began to whirl and scream.

SIR HUGH AND THE SWANS

Woe's me, that saw them stretch their necks
And hiss, as traitors do ;
I saw them arch their evil wings
And strike and stun Sir Hugh.

The king looked out o' the window bars,
And he was sad belike ;
But I could not see my lord the king
For the drowned face in the dyke.

The sleepy warders woke and stirred,
" The swans are mad in the moat ! "
I lifted up Sir Hugh o' the Rose
And laid him in the boat.

I made him a sark of rushes,
With stones at the feet and head. . . .
In the deepest dyke of Flanders
Sir Hugh o' the Rose lies dead.

The Mower



THEY were three bonny mowers
Were mowing half the day ;
They were three bonny lasses
A-making of the hay.

“ Who’ll go and fetch the basket ? ”
“ Not I.” “ Nor I.” “ Nor I.”
They had no time for falling out
Ere Nancy Bell came by.

“ What’s in your basket, Nancy Bell ? ”
“ Sweet cakes and currant wine,
And venison and cider, lads ;
Come quickly, come and dine.”

They were two bonny mowers
Fell to among the best ;
The youngest sits a-fasting,
His head upon his breast.

“ What ails ye, bonny mower,
You sit so mournfully ? ”
“ Alas ! what ails me, Nancy Bell ?
’Tis all the love of thee.”

THE MOWER

“ Now laugh and quaff, my bonny lad,
And think no more o’ me.
My lover is a finer man
Than any twain o’ ye.

“ He’s bought for me a kirtle,
He’s bought for me a coat,
Of three-and-thirty colours,
Wi’ tassels at the throat.

“ And twenty Maids of Honour
They stitched at it a year,
And sewed in all their needlework
The kisses of my dear ! ”

Rudel and the Lady of Tripoli



PART I.

THERE was in all the world of France
No singer half so sweet :
The first note of his viol brought
A crowd into the street.

And as he sat in Avignon
With princes at their wine,
In all that lusty company
Was none so fresh and fine.

His kirtle's of the Arras-blue
His cap of pearls and green,
His golden curls fall tumbling round
The bonniest face I've seen :

But hark ! the lords are laughing loud
And lusty in their mirth
For each has pledged his own lady
The fairest dame on earth.

"Now, hey, Rudel ! You singer, Rudel !
Say, who's the fairest lass ?
I'll wager many a lady's eyes
Have been your looking-glass ! "

RUDEL AND THE LADY OF TRIPOLI

His lady's portrait each has ta'en,
And dashed it on the board.
Then lightly laugheth Geoffrey Rudel
And counts the treasured hoard.

He lifts them up and lays them down
With fingers nimble and deft ;
He lifts them up and lays them down
Till only one is left.

There's only a twist of silver
About a parchment skin,
That's lain so close against a heart
The colour's worn and thin.

There's only a twist of foreign wire
There's only a faded face . . .
What ails, what ails Geoffrey Rudel ?
He has fallen from his place.

He's fallen plumb across the board
Without a word or sign ;
The golden curls that hide his face
Are dabbled in the wine.

He's fallen numb and dumb as death,
While all the princes stare—
Then up one old Crusading Knight
Arose, and touched his hair :

“Rudel, Rudel, Geoffrey Rudel,
Give me her picture back !
Without her face against my breast
The world grows dim and black.

“Rudel, Rudel, Geoffrey Rudel,
Give back my life to me !
Or I will kill you, Geoffrey Rudel
And take it desperately !”

RUDEL AND THE LADY OF TRIPOLI

Then straightway awoke and rose Rudel—
And hey, but he was white !
Thin and fierce his lips were set ;
His eyes were cold and bright.

The picture's in his left hand,
The dagger's in the right.
Stabbed to the core, upon the floor
Fell down that stranger-knight.

Rang loud the swords in the scabbards,
The voices loud and high—
“ Let pass, let pass ! ” cried out Rudel,
“ Let pass before he die—”

The lords fell back in grim array
Around the dying man :
“ For pity and pardon let him kneel
And pray, if so he can ! ”

But never a word said Geoffrey
Save only, “ Who is she ? ”
One moment smiled the dying man—
“ The Lady of Tripoli ! ”

He opened wide his sea-blue eyes,
Dead, in a face of stone. . . .
Out to the windy dark Rudel,
Unhindered, rushed alone.

PART II.

“ Hew the timbers of sandal wood
And planks of ivory,
Rear up the shining masts of gold
And let us put to sea.

“ Sew the sails with a silken thread
That all are silken too,
Sew them with scarlet pomegranates
Upon a sheet of blue.

RUDEL AND THE LADY OF TRIPOLI

“Rig the ship with a rope of gold
And let us put to sea.
And now goodbye to good Marseilles
And hey for Tripoli !”

Up and down the golden ship
That's sailing to the south,
Rudel goes singing to himself,
A smile about his mouth.

And up the masts and on the bridge
The sailors stop to hear :
There's not a lark in the May-heaven
Can sing so high and clear !

There's not a thrush or a nightingale
Can sing so full and glad.
Yet there's a soul that sighs i' the song,
And the soul is wise and sad.

Rudel goes singing to himself
As he looks across the sea—
“Lady,” he says, “I'll sing at last,
Please God, in Tripoli.”

For pale across the wan water
A shining wonder grows,
As pale as on the murky night
The dawn of pearl and rose.

And dim across the flood so grey
A city 'gins to rise,
A pale, enchanted Eastern place,
White under radiant skies.

O domes and spires, O minarets,
O heavy-headed drowse
Of nodding palms, O strangling rose
Sweet in the cypress boughs !

RUDEL AND THE LADY OF TRIPOLI

“Heave-to, O mariners, heave ashore
As swiftly as may be.
Go, now, my stripling page, along
The streets of Tripoli,
And say Rudel, Rudel has come—
And say that I am he.”

An hour's gone by, an hour or two,
But still we're far from night,
When lo! there glides along the quay
A lady like a light.

You could not tell how tall she was
So heaved the light and fell;
The shining of enchanted gems,
The waving of a veil,
She drifts along the golden deck
And stands before Rudel.

But as she bends to kiss Rudel
He starts to meet her eyes,
That glitter in her ancient skin
Like Fire that never dies.

But as she bends to clasp Rudel,
He trembles 'neath her hair,
Ravelled in many a snowy ring
About her shoulders bare.

And as she calls his name aloud,
Her voice is thin and strange
As night-winds in the standing reeds
When the moon's about to change.

She's opened wide her bridal arms,
She's bent her wintry face;—
What ails, what ails Geoffrey Rudel?
He has fallen from his place.

RUDEL AND THE LADY OF TRIPOLI

He's fallen plumb across the board
Without a word or sign,
His golden locks that stream so bright,
Are dabbled in the wine.

He's opened wide his dazzled eyes,
Dead in a face of stone.
Into the windy dark of Death
His spirit drifts alone.

The Dead Mother



LORD ROLAND on his roan horse
Is riding far and fast,
Though white the eddying snow is driven
Along the northern blast.

There's snow upon the holly-bush,
There's snow upon the pine ;
There's many a bough beneath the snow
He had not thought so fine—
For the last time Roland crossed the moor
He rode to Palestine.

Now pale across the windy hills
A castle 'gins to rise,
With unsubstantial turrets thin
Against the windy skies.

“Welcome, O welcome, Towers of Sands,
I welcome you again !
Yet often in my Syrian tent,
I saw you far more plain.”

Lord Roland spurs his roan horse
Through all the snow and wind—
And soon he's reached those towers so wan,
And left the moor behind.

“Welcome, Sir John the Steward !
How oft in Eastern lands
I've called to mind your English face,
And sighed to think of Sands.

THE DEAD MOTHER

“If still you love your old play-mate
You loved so well of yore—
Go up, go up, and tell my mother
That Roland’s at the door.”

“O how shall I tell you, Lord Roland,
The news that you must know?—
Your mother is dead, Lord Roland—
She died a month ago.”

When day was gone and night was come,
When all things turn to sleep.
Lord Roland in the darkness, then,
Learned that a man can weep.

“O why did I stay so long from home
And tarry so many a year,
And now I’ll see thee never again,
Thy voice I’ll never hear.

“There’s a flood of death betwixt us twain,
A flood that is dark and dour ;
But if my prayer can reach thee, Mother,
And if the dead have power,
Come back from Heaven, come back, my
Mother,
An’ it be but for an hour.”

It’s a long, long road from Heaven to earth ;
And a weary road, I ween,
For whoso passed the gates of Death
To reach those gardens green.

’Tis a long, long road from the heart o’ the grave
To the home where kinsmen sleep ;
But a mother thinks no road too long
Hearing her children weep.

THE DEAD MOTHER

The moon has dropt behind the moor,
The night is quiet and still . . .
What makes the flesh of Lord Roland
To shudder and turn chill ?

Something stirs in the light o' the flame,
Aye drifting nigher and nigher . . .
"My hands are chill," says a voice in the wind,
"I'll warm them at the fire.

"Give me a crust o' your bread, my son,
Give me a cup o' your wine.
Long have I fasted for your sake,
And long you'll fast for mine."

Lord Roland stares across the dusk
With stern and dreadful eyes,
There's only a wind in the light o' the fire,
A wind that shudders and sighs.

"My limbs are faint," sighs a voice in the wind
"My feet are bruised and torn—
"It's long I've seen no linen sheets,
I'll rest me here till morn."

There's an eerie shape in the chamber now,
And shadowy feet that move ;
The fire goes out in a sullen ash,
Like the angry end of love—

And out of doors the red cock cries,
And then the white and the grey—
Where one spirit crossed Whinny-moor,
There's two that hurry away.

And silent sits Lord Roland, alone,
Stiff, with a look of dread ;
And the chilly beams of morning fall
About a dead man's head.

The Death of Prester John

(YASHT XXII.)



WHEN Prester John was like to die, he called his priests
and said :

“ O Mages, seers, and sorcerers, sayers of holy sooth,
Where's the soul of a faithful man when the body's
cold and dead ?

Where's the soul of a corpse on the bier ?

Answer, and speak the truth.”

The priests stood round the couch in rows beside the
dying king,

“ Will no one speak ? ” said Prester John, “ Ye who
have time and breath ? ”

Is there not one of all my priests will answer me this
thing :

Where's the soul of a faithful man on the first night
after death ? ”

Then up and spake the oldest seer, and he was white
as rime :

“ Have I not fasted ninety years to see what none
may see ?

Between thy death and mine (he said) is but a little
time,

And what I speak, O King, I speak for me no less
than thee.

“ When Death had loosed the soul of a man, it kneels
upon the bier

Among the lights about the head, lighter and brighter
than they,

THE DEATH OF PRESTER JOHN

And sings the lauds of God all night in a sweet voice
and a clear,

And sings the lauds of God all night until the dawn
of day.

“And when the watching soul hath waked until the
morning rise,

A wind comes rushing with the dawn, a wind of
youth and mirth ;

And down the breeze a maiden moveth, flying Angel-
wise ;

And deeper is the joy o’ the soul than all the joy of
earth.

“The maid shall take his hands in hers and ‘Welcome,’
shall she say,

‘Behold thy Conscience ! look at me ! Thou art
my master, thou !

For I was fair, but thou hast made me fairer than the day.

And I was bright ; but turn, O Soul, and gaze upon
me now !’

“Behold the Saints, in ranks of bliss, shall throng on
either hand

And press to greet them amorously : ‘Whence
camest thou ? and when ?

Ah, say how fares the world of earth, the loving, sorrow-
ing land ?

Art thou content with Heaven, O Soul, after the life
of men ?’

“But One shall speak : ‘Be patient, Spirits ! The will
of God is best !

Respect the Soul, who, weary from the dolorous pass
and sore,

Enjoys eternal bliss at last and enters into rest—

But ask him not—ye may not ask ! if he would live
once more.’”

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